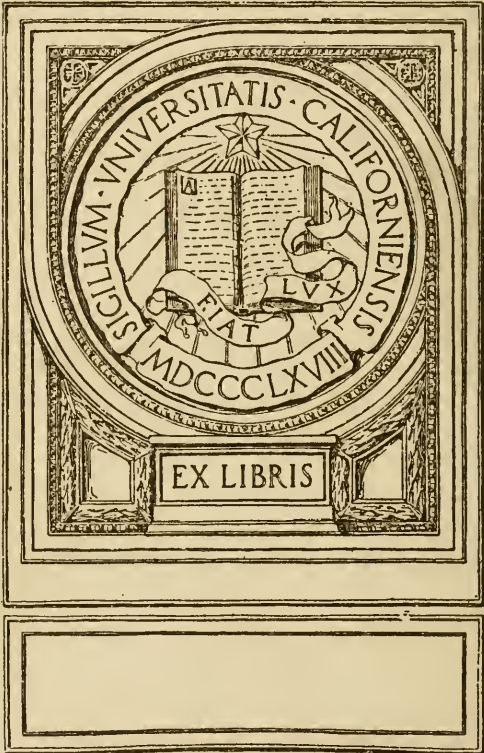




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# STUDIES IN SHAKESPEARE

By  
J. CHURTON COLLINS

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## ERRATA

Preface, p. vii, *for* "cumulately"  
*read* "cumulatively"

P. 121, *for* "tyro" *read* "tiro"

P. 151, *read*—

Stille

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## Preface

**T**HOUGH a preface is generally superfluous, it is needed in the present volume, as the object of the essays here collected, as well as their relation to preceding contributions to the study of Shakespeare by other writers, may easily be misunderstood. The first essay, that on *Shakespeare as a Classical Scholar*, can only claim originality in a limited sense. Mr. Russell Lowell, though when I wrote my essay I was not aware of the fact, had long ago suggested that Shakespeare may have had access to the Greek dramas through the medium of Latin translations, and several critics, among others Dr. Maginn and Mr. Spencer Baynes, had contended that he was probably a fair Latin scholar. But Russell Lowell contented himself with little more than suggestion, and neither Dr. Maginn nor Spencer Baynes contributed very much towards establishing their hypothesis. What merit my paper may have lies in the fact that it is very much fuller than anything which, so far as my knowledge goes, has yet appeared on the subject; that it suggests and marshals many new arguments in favour of the extended hypothesis that the poet was not merely a fair Latin scholar, but that his knowledge of the

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classics both of Greece and Rome was remarkably extensive; and that it supports these arguments with illustrations more numerous than can be found elsewhere. For many years the Greek dramatists and Shakespeare have been my intimate companions, and my analogies have been, in nearly all cases, such as my own reading and memory have supplied me with. But in many of them I have, of course, been anticipated by other scholars, notably by some of the *Variorum* editors, by Boyes, in his *Illustrations of the Tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles*, and, in other cases, by Dr. Lewis Campbell in his large edition of Sophocles. But by far the greater portion of them had been noted long before I was acquainted with Boyes' work, and long before Dr. Lewis Campbell had published his Sophocles. *Suum cuique* should, in the ethics of every scholar, be regarded as a precept so binding that anticipation should be held to constitute obligation, and I am quite willing so to interpret it, without, I may modestly add, any fear as to the result of a comparison between what will be found here for the first time, and what may be found elsewhere. And yet I say this with hesitation. For, while this volume was going through the press I found I had been anticipated by Grant White in what I certainly thought I had been the first to notice, namely, the remarkable parallel between the passage in the *First Alcibiades*

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of Plato and *Troilus and Cressida*, III. iii. 104-10.

And now a few words about the parallel illustrations. It must not be supposed that I have any wish to attach undue weight to them. As a rule such illustrations belong rather to the trifles and curiosities of criticism, to its *tolerabiles nugæ* than to anything approaching importance. But, as the object of this paper was to establish a probability that reminiscences, more or less unconscious perhaps, of classical reading not in English translations but in Latin and possibly in Greek were constantly occurring to Shakespeare's memory, they could not be ignored. And, cumulately, they are remarkable; for, let me repeat here, that so far from exhausting what I have collected I have chosen only such as are typical of whole groups. My rule has been not to give any passages which might have come from translations. Thus, I have given none from Terence, because the whole of Terence was accessible to Shakespeare in literal translations, as I have noted; none from Virgil, because in the passages which are reminiscences of Virgil he might possibly have consulted either Douglas, or Surrey, or Phaer, or Stanyhurst, or Fleming; nor have I drawn illustrations from Seneca's tragedies, except where it is quite clear that he used the original; or from Ovid, except in the case of works which had not been translated, or in the case of passages in which a compari-

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son with the English version shows that he was following the original. My rule has also been to ignore those which may obviously have been derived from secondary sources, such as—

At lovers' perjuries,  
They say Jove laughs  
(*Rom. and Jul.*, II. ii. 92-3)—

or the lines in *Titus Andronicus*—

Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?  
Draw near them then in being pitiful;

so exactly reproducing, as Steevens remarks, Cicero *Pro Ligario* (xii. 32):

Homines ad deos nullâ re propius accedunt quam salutem hominibus dando

—that is, in nothing do men come nearer to the gods than in being merciful to men. A passage also recalled, it may be noticed in passing, in *Edward III.* v. 1.

Kings approach the nearest unto God  
By giving life and safety unto men.

Nor, in the case of authors who had not been translated, have I cited parallels which might reasonably be taken for mere coincidences. I have not assumed, for example, that Shakespeare had read Catullus because we find in *Love's Labour's Lost*, II. i. 9:

Be now as prodigal of all dear grace  
As nature was in making graces dear,  
When she did starve the general world beside,  
And prodigally gave them all to you;

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and in Catullus, *Epig.* lxxxvi. 5-6—

Lesbia formosa est; quae cum pulcherrima tota est,  
Tum omnibus una omnes surripuit veneres;

and such parallels with the same poet as we find in *Comedy of Errors* (II. ii. 276-78), and Catullus, lxi. (*Epithal. Manlii*) 106-109, or *Hamlet* (III. i. 79), and Catullus (iii. 11-12) and *Tempest* (III. i. 83-86), and Catullus, lxiv. (*Epithal. Pel. et Thet.* 158-163, though these are strengthened by what may possibly be a reminiscence of a passage in the same poem—which could hardly have failed to impress Shakespeare—the picture of Ariadne deserted by Theseus 51-70, referred to in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (IV. iv. 172-3).

In treating of parallel passages it is, indeed, always well to bear in mind Gibbon's sensible remark when, commenting on the remarkable similarity of the lines in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* (III. ii. 198-219) to a passage in Gregory Nazianzen's poem on his own life, he observes: "Shakespeare had never read the poems of Gregory Nazianzen . . . but his mother tongue, the language of nature, is the same in Cappadocia and in Britain."<sup>1</sup>

As a proof, or at least a presumption, that Shakespeare was acquainted with the Greek dramas far more significance belongs to the evidence which is not based on parallel passages,

<sup>1</sup> *Decline and Fall* (Edit. Smith), vol. iii. p. 366.

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however [interesting, and possibly important, may be the collateral testimony afforded by them. In this part of my thesis I am not aware that I have been anticipated.

The essay on *Sophocles and Shakespeare as Theological and Ethical Teachers*, which is here printed for the first time, was delivered as a lecture some years ago at University College in London. It has a place in this volume, partly because it is a plea for a more serious view of the functions of poetry than is commonly taken, and partly because, like the first of these essays, it is a contribution, however imperfect, to the comparative study of ancient and modern classical literature. Nothing which can, in any way, tend to counteract the blow which Oxford and Cambridge have inflicted on the influence and authority of the Greek and Roman classics, by establishing schools of literature from which those classics have been expressly excluded, can, in my opinion, be superfluous. In this essay I must express my indebtedness to Gustav Dronke's excellent monograph *Die religiösen und sittlichen Vorstellungen des Aeschylus und Sophokles*, and also to the late Mr. Evelyn Abbot's Essay on the Theology and Ethics of Sophocles in *Hellenica*.

In the essay on Shakespeare as a Lawyer I have of course been greatly indebted to Lord Campbell's famous letter on which the essay is based. The fact that Lord Campbell



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was lazy, or had not leisure, has left room for the humble merit of mere industry, and is the sole justification for the intervention of a layman like myself. I learn from a note in Dr. Ward's *English Dramatic Literature* that a work on this subject has been written by an American lawyer, Mr. F. F. Heard. But Mr. Heard's work I have not seen and could not, after diligent search, procure; there is no copy of it in the British Museum, in the Library of the Incorporated Law Society, or, I am informed, in the libraries of any of the Inns of Court.

For the material of the essay on Shakespeare and Holinshed I am solely indebted to Mr. Boswell-Stone's *Shakespeare's Holinshed*, and I shall be quite content if the use which I have made of it may throw some little light on Shakespeare's method as a dramatic artist, or, better still, if it shows how indispensable Mr. Boswell-Stone's excellent work is to all serious students of the poet's English histories. With regard to the paper on *Shakespeare and Montaigne*, considering how largely I have drawn on the parallels pointed out by Mr. Robertson, I am sorry I have not been able to express my obligation by agreeing with his conclusions.

In vindicating the authenticity of *Titus Andronicus*, I have been anticipated by Charles Knight in a dissertation appended to the volume in his edition of Shakespeare containing the doubtful

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plays; and, as I learn from Dr. Ward, by H. Kurz *Zu Titus Andronicus*, as well as by A. Schroer *Über Titus Andronicus. Zur Kritik der neuesten Shakespeare-Forschung*. The last two I have not sought and not seen; for though I love German poetry, and am not revolted by German classical prose, I abominate German academic monographs, and indulge myself in the luxury of avoiding them, wherever it is possible to do so; being moreover "insular" enough to think that, on the question of the authenticity of an Elizabethan drama, an English scholar can dispense with German lights. To Knight's dissertation my debt, it will be seen, is slight; and, indeed, my essay, such as it is, represents a purely independent study of the question. It has been reprinted with revisions and additions, mainly as a protest against the recklessness of speculative destructive criticism in its application to Shakespeare, and because the assumption of the genuineness of this play affords very important collateral testimony to Shakespeare's classical attainments.

In the paper on the text of Shakespeare, I have purposely refrained from discussing the theory that the deviations from the texts of the Quartos, and more particularly the excisions from them in the First Folio, were due to the poet's own revising hand; for, this question, as well as the whole question of the relation of the texts of the Quartos to that of the First

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Folio, would require, even in outline, a lengthy dissertation.

The essay which I have ventured to entitle *The Bacon-Shakespeare Mania* originally appeared in the *Saturday Review*, but it has been revised and enlarged. I make no apology for its reproduction here, though I am well aware that in some quarters it is not likely to be received with favour, and may even give offence: certainly, it is with unmingled regret that I have felt compelled to express myself as I have done about the work of so distinguished a man as Dr. Webb. Plain speaking is so much out of fashion now that anything which approaches censure is at once put down to personal malice. May I, therefore, be allowed to say that I have not the honour to be acquainted with the gentleman whose book I have criticized, and that he is known to me only by what I learn from the title-page of his work. If the critique does not justify itself, nothing that I can add here can contribute to its justification.

Of all the frivolities and follies now epidemic in the present too general degradation of literary criticism, the monstrous myth of which Dr. Webb has constituted himself the apologist is by far the most mischievous. It is not merely that names, which are the pride and glory of our country, are becoming associated with the buffooneries of sciolists, cranks, and

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fribbles, and thus gradually acquiring a sort of ludicrous connotation; but, for the sane and intelligent study of our national classics, is being substituted a morbid scrutiny for evidence in support of paradoxes, and an unsavoury interest in hypothetical scandals about their private lives.

It remains for me to thank the editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, for leave to reprint the papers on Shakespeare as a Classical Scholar; the editor of the *National Review*, for permission to reproduce the paper on *Titus Andronicus*; the editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, for allowing me to reproduce portions of an article contributed by me many years ago on Shakespeare as a Prose-Writer; and the editor of the *Saturday Review*, for permission to reprint the essay on the Bacon-Shakespeare question. The other essays have been so much enlarged and altered that their original appearance in a current literary journal represented little more than their outline. In the last paper, being, as it is, polemical, I am glad to retain the editorial form of expression, for though "we" may be ridiculous, "I" is hateful.

For the convenience of those who are not Greek scholars or who have allowed their Greek to get rusty,—unhappily, in these days, our Greek is usually the first of our attainments which we do allow to get rusty,—I have added translations, as literal as I could make them, compatible with readableness, to the Greek quotations.

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## SHAKESPEARE AS A CLASSICAL SCHOLAR

### I

**T**HERE are certain traditions which the world appears to have made up its mind to accept without inquiry. Their source or sources may be suspicious, their intrinsic improbability may be great, but no one dreams of seriously questioning them. Whatever else becomes the subject of dispute, of doubt, or of dissent, a strange superstition seems to exempt them even from debate. If here and there a note of scepticism should be struck it finds no response. A very striking illustration of this is the tradition that Shakespeare's knowledge of the Greek and Roman classics was confined to English translations, that he had scarcely enough Latin to spell out a passage in Virgil or Cicero, and that in Greek it is doubtful whether he went beyond the alphabet. When Oxford and Cambridge decided to include English literature in their curricula, and it was contended that the study of our own classics should be associated with that of the Greek and Roman classics, on the ground of their intimate critical

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and historical connexion, one of the strongest arguments advanced by the party in favour of the independent recognition of our own literature was the supposed case of Shakespeare. Why, it was asked, should the study of English literature be associated with the study of languages and literatures of which the greatest of English writers was all but wholly ignorant, and to which he owed nothing immediately? If Shakespeare could dispense with Greek and Latin, it was surely the height of pedantry to require a knowledge of Greek and Latin from those who studied him. In a word, both within the Universities and without, Shakespeare has been, for nearly three hundred years, the stock example of what can be achieved by a poet and a philosopher who had no pretension to classical scholarship, and who knew nothing, except what he picked up in conversation or through versions in his own tongue, of classical writers.

Now, I need scarcely say that it is in itself of little consequence whether the most prodigally endowed and the most teeming fertile genius which has ever been bestowed on man added to its treasures by drawing on the treasures of the ancients, whether the creator of Hamlet and of Falstaff, of Lear and of Prospero, of Cleopatra and of Imogen, of Portia and of Mrs. Quickly, did or did not disdain to borrow touches and derive suggestions from the *dramatis personae* of the Greek and Roman stage; whether in the



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infinite abundance of his wit and wisdom, of his sentiments, of his descriptions, of his illustrative imagery, what can be traced to classical sources was really derived from those sources, or was the result of independent inspiration, experience, and reflection. But if such an inquiry has no relation to criticism in the higher sense of the term it is at least of curious interest; I will venture to add, even at the risk of being accused of pedantry, that it is not without usefulness. If ancient classical literature is, as a subject of teaching, to maintain its place in modern courses of study, it can never be linked too closely with our own. Its cultivation, or at least its vogue, must depend not simply on its intrinsic value but on its historical importance. We hear much in our Universities about the "continuity of history"; if the continuity of literature, an equally important fact, had also been recognized we should have been spared the absurdity of the establishment of Honour Schools of Literature in Oxford and Cambridge from which the classics of Greece and Rome are expressly excluded.

As a particular illustration of the intimacy of the relation between our own classics and those of Greece and Rome I purpose to show, and I hope to prove, that so far from Shakespeare having no pretension to classical scholarship he could almost certainly read Latin with as much facility as a cultivated

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Englishman of our own time reads French ; that with some at least of the principal Latin classics he was intimately acquainted ; that through the Latin language he had access to the Greek classics, and that of the Greek classics in the Latin versions he had, in all probability, a remarkably extensive knowledge.

And first, let us examine the tradition on which the assumption that he had little or no claim to classical scholarship is based. It originated, of course, from the famous line in Ben Jonson's memorial verses, "And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek." No one would dispute that Jonson was a very competent judge ; and, as his object in making the remark was to found eulogy upon it, it was not intended to be depreciatory. But Jonson, we must remember, was a scholar, and posed ostentatiously as a scholar in the technical sense of the term. It was the distinction on which he most prided himself, and on which, as is abundantly clear, he based, in the true spirit of a pedant, which he certainly was, his chief claim to superiority over his great contemporary. To him "small Latin" and "less Greek" would connote what it would connote to Scaliger or to Casaubon. A literary acquaintance with Greek and Latin, the power, that is to say, of reading them *ad sensum* with facility and pleasure, is an accomplishment very different from a critical acquaintance with them, or

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from the power of composing in them. We may be quite sure that Jonson would have spoken of the classical attainments of Shelley, of Tennyson, and of Browning in the same way. And yet it is notorious that these three poets, though they had no pretension to "scholarship," were as familiar with the Greek and Roman classics in the original as they were with the classics of their own language. Nor is this all. We know from Harrison and others that in the Elizabethan age an acquaintance with the Greek and Roman classics was assumed to be the monopoly of those who had been educated at Oxford and Cambridge, and that a man who was not associated with the Universities was at once set down as no scholar.

Shakespeare stood almost alone among the prominent poets and dramatists of his time as having belonged to neither of the Universities. This not only excluded him from the ranks of the University wits as they were called, but from any acknowledged claim to the accomplishment which they absurdly regarded as their exclusive privilege and distinction. It is not improbable that Nashe's gibes in the address prefixed to Greene's *Menaphon* about those who "feed on naught but the crumbs that fall from the translator's trencher," and who "can scarce Latinise their neck-verse if they should need," are levelled at him. It is certain that in the *Returne from Parnassus*<sup>1</sup> he is sarcastically

<sup>1</sup> Part ii. Act v. sc. 3.

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associated with those who owe nothing to learning and everything to native wit. There is, indeed, ample evidence to show that Shakespeare's alleged want of learning is a tradition emanating in the first instance from the pedantic jealousy of the Academic party. What, after his great rival's death, Ben Jonson transformed into an occasion for compliment he had, no doubt, during Shakespeare's life-time, employed as a means of contemptuous disparagement. Leonard Digges, following Jonson, accentuated the tradition in the well-known lines:—<sup>1</sup>

Next Nature only help'd him, for look thorough  
This whole book, thou shalt find he doth not borrow  
One phrase from Greeks, nor Latins imitate,  
Nor once from vulgar languages translate.

And what Digges expresses in verse Fuller, in the next generation, expresses with equal emphasis in prose. To similar effect spoke Suckling and Denham. Hales, of Eton, lent his authority to the same tradition, observing that "if Shakespeare had not read the classics he had likewise not stolen from them." Then came Dryden with his happy epigram, "Shakespeare wanted not the spectacles of books to read nature." When Gildon ventured to assert, though without adequate proof, the opposite theory, Dennis replied that "he who allows Shakespeare had

<sup>1</sup> *Upon Master William Shakespeare*, intended for insertion in the first folio, but not published before 1640 in a spurious edition of Shakespeare's poems. See *Variorum Shakespeare*, ed. 1813, vol. ii. pp. 199-202.

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learning, and a learning with the ancients, ought to be looked upon as a detractor from the glory of Great Britain." Next came Addison with his well-known simile of Pyrrhus' ring.<sup>1</sup> Young, like Addison, contended that he owed nothing except to Nature.<sup>2</sup> Pope, Theobald, and Warburton adopted a middle course, and were inclined to believe that Shakespeare was not without some pretensions to classical learning.

In 1746, Upton, in a work entitled *Critical Observations on Shakespeare*, by the simple process of accumulating parallel passages, the majority of which were so vague and general that they could be scarcely called even coincidences, attempted to show that Shakespeare was profoundly acquainted with Greek and Latin. This ridiculous work, which in 1748 was enlarged in a second edition, was followed in the same year by Peter Whalley's *Inquiry into the Learning of Shakespeare, with Remarks on Several Passages of his Plays*, a work, if possible, more ridiculous still. Whalley applies the same method as Upton, though with much less learning, and arrives at the same conclusion. At last, in 1766, appeared Farmer's famous

<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, No. 597. "Shakespeare was indeed born with all the seeds of poetry, and may be compared to the stone in Pyrrhus' ring, which, as Pliny tells us, had the figure of Apollo and the Nine Muses in the veins of it produced by the spontaneous hand of Nature."

<sup>2</sup> *Conjectures on Original Composition*. Works (Ed. 1774), vol. iv. 289.

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*Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare.* Farmer's contention was that Shakespeare had no classical knowledge at all, that "if he remembered enough of his schoolboy learning to put *Hig, hag, hog* into the mouth of Sir Hugh Evans it was as far as he could go"; that in all cases where he had drawn on the classics, imitated or referred to them, he had had recourse to English versions and second-hand information. Farmer certainly, and with much humour too, made havoc of many of the supposed proofs of Shakespeare's classical learning paraded by Upton and Whalley. He showed conclusively that in the Roman plays Shakespeare had followed North's Plutarch without consulting either the original or the Latin version, that for some of his Latin quotations he had gone no further than Lily's Grammar, that in the celebrated passage in the *Tempest*, "Ye elves of hills, woods, standing lakes,"<sup>1</sup> etc., which had been cited as proof positive of his acquaintance with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, he had followed not the Latin text but Golding's English version, and that many other allusions, parallels, and parodies adduced as testimony of his classical scholarship could be traced to works in his own language.

But Farmer, though he demolished Upton and Whalley, is very far from making out his own case. The really crucial tests in the question he either evades or defaces. Thus he makes no

<sup>1</sup> *Tempest*, v. 1.

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reference to the fact that the *Rape of Lucrece* is derived directly from the *Fasti* of Ovid, of which at that time there appears to have been no English version. He admits that the *Comedy of Errors* was modelled on the *Menæchmi* of Plautus, and that the author of it must have been minutely acquainted with the *Menæchmi*, but asserts that Shakespeare read it in Warner's English version, the publication of which was subsequent, and probably long subsequent, to the composition of the play. To the Latin lesson in the *Taming of the Shrew* he does not even refer. On almost all of the classical parallels which are really worth considering, he is silent. Of the very few which he is obliged to notice he disposes by assuming that Shakespeare had been raking in Ronsard, mediaeval homilies, and the uncouth Scotch jargon of Douglas's *Virgil*. That a sensible man like Farmer should not see that, if Shakespeare recalls the *Æneid* and the *Fasti*, the balance of probability is much more in favour of his having gone to the Latin than of his having troubled himself to spell out mediaeval homilies and archaic Scotch is indeed strange. But Farmer's essay was supposed to settle the question, to "put an end for ever," as Warton emphatically expressed it, "to the dispute concerning the learning of Shakespeare." Colman, indeed, protested, and Johnson, Capell and Malone faintly demurred; but all was of no avail, and Farmer carried the day. Ben Jonson's

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"small Latin and less Greek" and Farmer's corroborating conclusion became henceforth inseparable from Shakespeare's reputation.

So matters rested till 1837, when Dr. Maginn, in two articles in *Blackwood's Magazine*, pleaded for some modification of Farmer's contentions. He pointed out the *a priori* improbability of Shakespeare having no curiosity about the classics, and no desire to read them in the original. He drew attention to the evidence which Farmer had either ignored or misrepresented. He showed that if in the crucial passage from the *Tempest* Shakespeare had followed Golding's version, he followed it only so far as it suited his purpose, that he had the original in his hands or in his memory, and had introduced touches from it. But Maginn, who had neither leisure nor taste for minute investigation, went no further. Then, in two articles in *Fraser's Magazine*, for December, 1879, and January, 1880, and since reprinted in his *Shakspere Studies*, the late Mr. Spencer Baynes took up the subject. He was the first to throw light on the kind of education which Shakespeare would probably receive at school, by giving an account of the methods and courses of study described in Brinsley's *Ludus Literarius* and Hoole's *New Discoverie of the Old Arte of Teaching Schoole*, written respectively about 1611 and 1636, and this is by far the most valuable part of his contribution to the subject. What was



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prescribed by professed educational reformers about 1611 and 1636, is hardly likely, however, to be exactly analogous to what actually obtained in a provincial grammar school in or about 1571, and I shall, therefore, substitute for the curriculum prescribed by them the curriculum drawn up for Ipswich Grammar School in 1528. For the rest, if we except the point about Titania, which will be referred to presently, Mr. Baynes is not of much assistance in this investigation, as he does not distinguish between what Shakespeare could have read only in the original and what was accessible to him in translation.

It may be safely assumed, though we have no proof, that Shakespeare received his education at the Stratford-on-Avon Grammar School, and it may, for reasons which will be presently explained, be assumed with equal probability that the instruction given there was analogous and not inferior to that ordinarily given in the schools of that day. Let us see what that education would be. He would enter the school some time between his eighth and ninth year. After passing out of the hands of the A-B-C-darius, who would teach him his alphabet, he would at once begin Latin, which he would learn as we now commonly learn, for practical purposes, modern languages, that is, colloquially through questions and answers in the language itself, and by getting phrases and sentences by

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heart; in other words, through what is prescribed in the curricula of those times as *Sententiae Pueriles*, *Pueriles Confabulatiunculae*, and Corderius's *Colloquia*. He would at the same time be thoroughly drilled in Lily's Latin Grammar (*Brevissima Institutio seu Ratio Grammatices cognoscendae ad omnium puerorum utilitatem praescripta*), prescribed by royal proclamation in each reign for use in every grammar school, and in construing and parsing the sentences learnt. Of his familiarity with this part of a classical education he gives us an amusing illustration in *Love's Labour's Lost* (Act iv. sc. 2, and Act v. sc. 1), in the *Taming of the Shrew* (Act iii. sc. 1), and in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* (Act iv. sc. 1). He would then proceed to such books as Erasmus's *Colloquia*, Mantuan's *Eclogae* (see *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. 2), and Cato's *Disticha*, on to such books as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, *Heroides*, and *Tristia*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and *Georgics*, selected comedies of Plautus and Terence, and portions of Caesar, Sallust, Cicero and Livy. The curriculum of Ipswich Grammar School, drawn up as early, it must be remembered, as 1528, may fairly be taken as typical of the instruction provided in the best schools of Shakespeare's time. There were to be eight classes in the school. In the first two the pupils were to be thoroughly exercised in the rudiments of Latin, the text-book being Lily's Grammar. In the third form

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they were to read a Latin version of Æsop, and Terence; in the fourth, Virgil; in the fifth, Cicero's Select Letters; in the sixth, Sallust or Caesar's Commentaries; in the seventh, Horace's Epistles and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*; and they were also required to write Latin verses. In the eighth they were to read the Commentaries of Donatus, and were to be required to discuss the style and characteristics of Terence.<sup>1</sup>

By 1570, Greek was commonly, though not universally, taught in schools, and whether it formed part of the instruction given in Stratford School would depend purely on the headmaster. If he were "a progressive" he would teach it; if not, the instruction would be confined to Latin. When taught, it was taught only in the highest forms. It is not at all unlikely that it was taught at Stratford, for, in a much more obscure place, Rotherham Grammar School, about the beginning of the seventeenth century, the sixth and seventh forms were, in addition to being drilled in Greek grammar (probably Clenard's or Camden's), construing the Greek Testament and Isocrates into Latin. We learn from Ascham that at Cambridge, as early as 1542, Sophocles and Euripides, Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, as well as Aristotle and Plato, were as familiar to students as the

<sup>1</sup> Leach's *English Schools at the Reformation*, p. 107.

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Latin classics used to be.<sup>1</sup> And this implies a high standard of preliminary instruction in the public schools. That the instruction at Stratford School was of a superior kind and included Greek is very probable.

The headmaster when Shakespeare entered the school was Walter Roche. Roche was, or had been, a Fellow of Corpus College, Oxford, and Corpus in Roche's time—he was elected Fellow in 1558—was in point of learning and intellectual activity pre-eminent in Oxford. The founder, Richard Fox, who had himself in 1477 been headmaster of Stratford-on-Avon School, had designed it as a centre of the New Learning. It was the first college in which Greek was taught, and in which the intelligent study of the chief Greek and Roman classics superseded the barbarism, to use Fox's own word, of the Middle Ages. Such were the antecedents of Shakespeare's first schoolmaster; of Roche's successors, Thomas Hunt and Thomas Jenkins, we know nothing, but we may safely assume that as scholars they were not inferior to their predecessor. Of the efficiency with which Latin

<sup>1</sup> See his remarkable account of the flourishing state of Greek at Cambridge in his letter to Brandesby: Aristoteles nunc et Plato, quod factum est etiam apud nos quinquennium, in sua lingua a pueris leguntur. Sophocles et Euripides sunt hic familiares quam olim Plautus fuerit, quum tu hic eras. Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon magis in ore et manibus teruntur quam tum Titus Livius. Quod de Cicerone olim nunc de Demosthene audires. *Epistola*. Works, vol. i. pt. i. pp. 25-6.

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was taught at Stratford-on-Avon School and of the familiarity of lads educated at that school with the Latin language, we are fortunately not without proof. In the *Appendix* to Malone's Life of Shakespeare will be found two Latin letters, written by *alumni* of Stratford School contemporary with Shakespeare: one by Abraham Sturley, afterwards an alderman of Stratford, to Richard Quiney, Shakespeare's friend; and one by young Richard Quiney, then about eleven years of age, to his father in London. The Latin is not indeed of classical purity, but, copious and fluent, it certainly shows a considerable knowledge of idiom and vocabulary, and great skill in composition. No one could doubt that the writers must have been able to read Latin with perfect facility.<sup>1</sup> We may, therefore, with probability assume that, unless the young Shakespeare was either lazy or stupid, he must have left school with a very competent knowledge of Latin, and, it may be, fairly or even well grounded in Greek.

But to pass from conjecture to facts. It may be conceded at once that nothing which Shakespeare has left us warrants us in pronouncing with certainty that he read the Greek classics in the original, or even that he possessed enough Greek to follow the Latin versions of those classics in the Greek text. He

<sup>1</sup> See Malone's Shakespeare, ed. Boswell, vol. i. 561-4, where the letters are given.

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may have been competent to do this, he may habitually have done so, but, for reasons which will presently be explained, absolute proof is impossible. What I wish to show is that he was well acquainted with Latin and with the Latin classics, and, through Latin, with the Greek classics.

His familiarity with the Latin language is evident, first, from the fact that he has, with minute particularity of detail, based a poem and a play on a poem of Ovid and on a comedy of Plautus which he must have read in the original, as no English translations, so far as we know, existed at the time; secondly, from the fact that he has adapted and borrowed many passages from the classics which were almost certainly only accessible to him in the Latin language; and, thirdly, from the fact that when he may have followed English translations it is often quite evident that he had the original either by him or in his memory.

Let us first take the case of the *Rape of Lucrece*. The story, as told by Shakespeare, follows the story as told by Ovid in the second book of the *Fasti* (*Fasti*, ii. 721-852). It had also been told in English by four writers who had likewise modelled their narratives on Ovid, by Chaucer in the *Legende of Goode Women*, by Lydgate in his *Falls of Princes* by Gower in his *Confessio Amantis*, and, in prose, by Painter in his *Palace of Pleasure*; but a careful comparison

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of these narratives with Shakespeare's, which it is not necessary to give in detail here, will conclusively show that Shakespeare has followed none of them—that Ovid, and Ovid only, is his original. The details given in Ovid, which neither Chaucer nor any of the other narrators reproduce, but which are reproduced by Shakespeare, place this beyond question. Thus Shakespeare alone represents the

Nunc primum externâ pectora tacta manu (746):

Her breasts, . . . . .  
A pair of maiden worlds unconquered  
Save of their lord, no bearing yoke they knew (407-9);  
the fine touch—

Quid, victor, gaudes? haec te victoria perdet (811);

A captive victor that hath lost in gain (730).

Nor has the "ter conata loqui, ter destitit" (823) been noticed by Chaucer or the others, though it is reproduced by Shakespeare.

*Three times with sighs she gives her sorrow fire,  
Ere once she can discharge one word of woe (1605-6).*

Again, in Ovid and Shakespeare, though not in Chaucer or in the others, Lucretia's father and husband throw themselves on her corpse (835-6).<sup>1</sup>

Ecce super corpus, communia damna querentes,  
Obliti decoris virque paterque jacent.

One touch indeed not only proves the scrupulous care with which Shakespeare follows Ovid, but

<sup>1</sup> See Shakespeare, 1732-3, for the father doing so; 1773-4 for the husband.

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his scholarship too—for the Latin is obscure and difficult: “*Brutus adest, tandemque animo sua nomina fallit,*” that is, stultifies his name (*brutus*, stupid) by the courage he shows. This Shakespeare *interprets* in the stanza:—

Brutus, who pluck'd the knife from Lucrece' side,  
Seeing such emulation in their woe,  
*Began to clothe his wit in state and pride,*  
*Burying in Lucrece' wound his follies show.*  
*He with the Romans was esteemed so*  
*As silly jeering idiots are with kings.* (1807-1812.)

In a word, a comparison of Chaucer's and Shakespeare's narratives will show that each represents an independent study of the Latin original, and that Shakespeare has followed Ovid with scrupulous care. When this poem was written there was no English translation of the *Fasti*, and Shakespeare must therefore have read it in the original.<sup>1</sup>

Let us next take *Venus and Adonis*. In *Venus and Adonis* he again draws on Ovid, the material, profusely and superbly embroidered and expanded with original imagery and detail, being derived from the story as told in the tenth book of the *Metamorphoses*,

<sup>1</sup> Warton, in his *History of English Poetry*, vol. iv. p. 241, says that among Coxeter's notes there is mention of an English translation of the *Fasti* before the year 1570, but the looseness and inaccuracy of Coxeter's assertions are well known; there is no record of this translation being seen, nor is there any mention of such a version either in the Stationers' Register or elsewhere.



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with much which is borrowed from the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in the fourth book, and from the story of the Calydonian boar hunt in the eighth book. But the *Metamorphoses* had been translated by Arthur Golding in 1575, and republished in a second edition in 1587. That Shakespeare was acquainted with Golding's translation is certain, and, as he may possibly have followed Golding and not Ovid in *Venus and Adonis*, this poem cannot be cited as evidence of his Latin scholarship. It is, I may add, just as likely that he followed the original as that he followed the translation, but as this does not admit of positive proof it is not here pressed. I hope presently to show that if elsewhere he used Golding's version it was not because of any unfamiliarity with the original. Before passing from Ovid it may be noted that there are in the dramas many apparent reminiscences of the Epistles from Pontus, and of these Epistles there was no English version in Shakespeare's time. I will give one example. In Epistle ii. book ii. 31-2, we have :—

. . . Fortuna miserrima tuta est,  
Nam timor eventus deterioris abest.

Of this the lines in *Lear*, iv. 2-5, are simply an expansion :—

To be worst,  
The lowest, most dejected thing of Fortune  
Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear;  
The lamentable change is from the best,  
The worst returns to laughter.

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Next comes the *Comedy of Errors*. This, as every one knows, is an adaptation, with additions and modifications, of the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, while the first scene of the third act is directly imitated from the *Amphitruo* of the same poet (*Amphitruo*, Act i. sc. 1 and Act iv. sc. 1-6). Now, it is all but certain that the *Comedy of Errors* was written between 1589 and 1592, and it is quite certain that it was written before the end of 1594. At that date there were no known English translations of those plays in existence, for Warner's version of the *Menaechmi* did not appear till 1595.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore probable almost to certainty that Shakespeare must have read Plautus in the original. Of his familiarity, indeed, with Plautus, there can be no question. In the *Taming of the Shrew* he borrows the names of two of the characters, Tranio and Grumio, from the *Mostellaria*. The scene in the same play, where the Pedant, assuming the form of Vincentio, is confronted with the real Vincentio, is plainly borrowed from the scene in the *Trinummus*, where the Sycophant, bringing a bill of credit purporting to come from Charmides, is con-

<sup>1</sup> In a notice from the printer to the readers prefixed to Warner's version it is certainly stated that this "diverse version of Plautus' Comedies had been Englished for the use and delight of his private friends, who in Plautus' own words are not able to understand them." But there is nothing to show that Shakespeare was acquainted with Warner or was among those friends.

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fronted by Charmides himself. The character, position, and fate of Falstaff in *The Merry Wives* are so analogous to those of Pyrgopolinices in the *Miles Gloriosus*, that we cannot but suspect reminiscence. Parolles and Pistol are plainly studies from Plautus. It is curious, too, that we find the same puns and plays on words in the two poets. Thus, as Steevens notices, the play on the word "crow," meaning a "crow-bar" as well as the bird, in *Comedy of Errors* (iii. 1), "If a crow help us in, sirrah, we'll pluck a crow together," is exactly analogous to the play on "upupa," which means a "hoopoe" or a "mattock," in the third scene of the fifth act of the *Captivi*. So in *The Merry Wives* :—

*Falstaff*. My honest lads, I will tell you what I am about.  
*Pistol*. Two yards and more ;

where we have exactly the same turn as in Plautus's untranslatable turn, where one character says to another : "Salve : Quid agitur?" and the person addressed replies, "Statur hic ad hunc modum" (*Pseudolus*, i. 5), and repeated in Terence.

It is always perilous to infer direct imitation from parallel passages which may be mere coincidences, but it is surely not unlikely that Polonius's famous precept in *Hamlet*—

Neither a borrower nor a lender be,  
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,

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may be a terse reminiscence of Plautus's—it may be given in English—"If you lend a person any money it becomes lost, so far as you are concerned. When you ask for it back again you may find a friend made an enemy by your kindness. Should you press still further, either you must part with that which you have lent, or else you must lose that friend" (*Trinummus*, iv. 3). It has been conjectured that the famous speech of Jacques in *As You Like It*, "All the world's a stage," etc., was suggested to Shakespeare by the phrase from Petronius, which was inscribed on the portico of the Globe Theatre, *Totus mundus agit histrionem*.<sup>1</sup> Is it not possible that he found the germ of the noble passage about the poet in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* (v. 1) in Plautus's *Pseudolus* (Act i. sc. 4, 7-10):—

Sed quasi poeta, tabulas quom cepit sibi,  
Quaerit quod nusquam est gentium, reperit tamen :  
Facit illud verisimile quod mendacium est.

(But just as the poet when he has taken up his tablets seeks what exists nowhere among men, and yet finds it, and makes that like truth which is mere fiction.)

In any case, of Shakespeare's familiarity with Plautus there can be no doubt—I have only given a few typical illustrations; the subject, if

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from *The Fragments . . . quod fere totus mundus exerceat histrionem*. Petronius, ed. Burmann, p. 673.

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treated in detail, would require a monograph<sup>1</sup>—and that he read him in the Latin is all but certain. If it be argued that he had access to manuscript translations, we can only reply that the balance of probability is very much more in favour of arguments based on facts than of arguments based on unsupported hypothesis, for of such translations there is no record.<sup>2</sup> Of Terence,<sup>3</sup> whom he frequently recalls (see Colman's notes in his translation), I say nothing, because he had access to Nicolas Udall's *Floures for Latin Speak- yng*, containing an English version of a large portion of three of the Comedies, published in 1560, to the second edition containing versions

<sup>1</sup> I would venture to suggest that it would form an appropriate subject for a thesis at the Universities.

<sup>2</sup> In the manuscripts in the British Museum there are only two versions from classical dramatists which can be assigned to the sixteenth century—an anonymous version of Seneca's *Medea*, circa 1600 (Sloane, 911 f. b. 100-15 b.), and a version of the greater part of the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, by Lady Lumley (Roy. 15, a. ix. f. 63). In the Bodleian there are none at all. This seems proof positive that classical translations could not have circulated on a large scale, or more examples could scarcely have failed to make their way into these collections.

<sup>3</sup> The parallels as collected by Colman are certainly remarkable, and in many of them Shakespeare might just as likely have gone to the original as to the English version. The line in the *Taming of the Shrew*, "redime te captum quam queas minimo," wrongly quoted or adapted from the *Eunuchus*, i. i. 29, on which Colman relied as a proof that Shakespeare was recollecting the original, occurs, as Farmer triumphantly pointed out, in Lily's Grammar.

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from the remaining Comedies, published in 1575, and later to Richard Bernard's literal translation of the whole of the Comedies, published in 1598.

Next, we come to the tragedies of Seneca. It would not be too much to say that *Titus Andronicus* and the three parts of Henry VI. are saturated with the influence of these tragedies, that that influence is as obviously apparent in *Richard III.*, and that it is to be traced in *King John*, and even in *Hamlet*, and in *Macbeth*. This has been so fully illustrated by Mr. J. W. Cunliffe, in his excellent monograph, *The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy* (pp. 66-88), that it is unnecessary for me to go over the ground again. But what I wish to insist on is that Shakespeare read Seneca in the Latin original, not in the lumbering English version of Studley, Nevile, Newton, Nuce, and Jasper Heywood, published by Newton in 1581. This must be obvious to any one who compares his reminiscences and imitations with the English version and the Latin original, though, necessarily in most cases, it is not possible to decide which he may have followed. As an illustration of a reminiscence which must almost certainly have been from the Latin, take these lines from *King John* (iii. 4) compared by Mr. Cunliffe:—

A sceptre, snatch'd with an unruly hand,  
Must be as boisterously maintained as gain'd:  
And he that stands upon a slippery place  
Makes nice of no vile hold to stay him up,

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a passage recalling generally *Hercules Furens*,  
341-5 :—

Rapta sed trepida manu  
Sceptra obtinentur : omnis in ferro est salus.  
Quod civibus tenere te invitis scias,  
Strictus tuetur ensis : alieno in loco  
Haud stabile regnum est.

Now the English translation not only mistranslates “obtinetur,” but gives, as Mr. Cunliffe points out, an entirely different turn to the whole passage, as may be seen by comparing it :—

But got with fearful hand  
My scepters are obtaynd : in surrd doth all my safety stand,  
What thee then wotst agaynst the will of cytesyns to get  
The bright drawn surrd must it defend : in forrayne coun-  
try set  
No stable kingdome is.

To paraphrase “alienus” as “slippery,” deducing that meaning from what “does not belong to one,” and so uncertain, is just what might be expected from an inexact scholar. In *Titus Andronicus* Seneca is twice quoted from memory in the Latin :—

Sit fas aut nefas  
Per styga per manes vehor. (ii. 1.)

Cf. *Hippolytus*, 1180 :—

Per styga per amnes . . . . sequar.

Again, iv. 1 :—

Magni dominator poli  
Tam lentus audis scelera? tam lentus vides?

the original being “Magne regnator Deûm,” etc. (*Hippolytus*, 671-2). The English version bears

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no resemblance to the style of Seneca, and, indeed, stands in pretty much the same relation to it as Hobbes' semi-doggerel version of the *Iliad* stands to the Greek original. But in his earlier plays, where the influence of Seneca is most perceptible, Shakespeare's style is often as near a counterpart in English of Seneca's style in Latin as can well be. Mr. Cunliffe, who has carefully compared Shakespeare's many indisputable reminiscences and imitations of Seneca both with the Latin and with the English version, is of opinion that the question as to which he followed is so nicely balanced that if the authorship of *Titus Andronicus* could be established it would turn the scale. But it seems to me that the scale is turned by evidence to which for some reason Mr. Cunliffe appears to attach no importance, the evidence to which I have just referred, the evidence of style and tone. What could be less like the style of Seneca than that of the English version? What more like it than the style of the passages in Shakespeare which recall him more closely in other respects?

Next, let us take Horace. In Shakespeare's time there was no translation of the *Odes*, and yet his plays abound in what certainly appear to be reminiscences of them. Take a very few from very many. Thus in *Richard III.* the lines (iii. 5):—

Who builds his hope *in air* of your fair looks  
Lives like a drunken sailor, etc.,



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is exactly the *Nescius auræ fallacis*, with the context of *Odes*, i. 5, while Shylock's warning to Jessica (*Merchant of Venice*, ii. 5):—

Lock up my doors; and when you hear the drum,  
And the vile squeaking of the wry-neck'd fife,  
Clamber not you up to the casements then,  
Nor thrust your head into the public streets—

is all but a literal translation of

Primâ nocte domum claude; neque in vias  
Sub cantu querulae despice tibiae,  
(*Odes*, iii. 7, 29-30.)

just as the expression in *Henry V.* (i. 1), about the summer grass, "*unseen yet crescive* in his faculty," is exactly the expression and image in the twelfth *Ode* of the first book 45-6:—

Crescit, occulto velut arbor aevo,  
Fama Marcelli.

The lines in *Much Ado*, iv. 1:—

What we have we prize, not to the worth,  
Whiles we enjoy it; but being lack'd and lost,  
Why then we rack the value, then we find  
The virtue that possession would not show us,  
Whiles it was ours—

look very like a paraphrase of *Odes*, iii. 24, 31-2:—

Virtutem incolumen odimus,  
Sublatam ex oculis quaerimus invidi.

The fourth scene of the fifth act of *Henry VI.*, part iii., is simply a paraphrase of *Ode* xiv. of Book I., while the lines in *Cymbeline*, iv. 2:—

Cowards father cowards and base things sire base, etc., recall *Odes*, iv. 4, 29-32.

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And he is quoted in the original in *Titus Andronicus* (iv. 2). In *Lear*, iii. 6, 85, the phrase—

You will say they are *Persian attire*,

if not an actual reminiscence of the “*Persicos apparatus*” of *Odes* i. xxxviii. 1, could only have occurred to a classical scholar.

There is a very curious bombastic passage in *Henry V.*, iii. 5 :—

The melted snow  
Upon the valleys: whose low vassal seat  
The Alps doth spit and void his rheum upon,

which sounds like a confused reminiscence of the line in the fifth satire of the second book :—

*Furius hibernas canã nive conspuit Alpes* (l. 41).

The Satires, Epistles, and *Ars Poetica* had, indeed, been translated by Thomas Drant in 1556, but Drant omits the passage altogether, so that if it be a reminiscence it is presumably a reminiscence of the Latin.

Again, Juvenal was not translated into English until after Shakespeare's death, but that he had read him seems certain. He is—there can surely be no doubt about this—the “satirical rogue” whom Hamlet is reading (Act ii. sc. 2), and the terrible picture of old age, in the tenth satire, to which Hamlet refers, seems to have haunted Shakespeare. The description of Osric and the dialogue between him and Hamlet (v. 2) looks like a reminiscence of Juvenal's parasite.

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*Osric.* I thank your lordship, it is very hot.

*Ham.* No, believe me, 'tis very cold . . .

*Osric.* It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

*Ham.* But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot . . .

*Osric.* Exceedingly, my lord, it is very sultry.

Igniculum brumae si tempore poscas,  
Accipit endromiden : si dixeris "æstuo," sudat.  
(*Sat.* iii. 102-3.)

When Lear, as he hears the thunder crashing over his head, breaks out into the speech beginning :—

Tremble, thou wretch,  
That hast within thee undivulged crimes, etc.  
(iii. 2)

he recalls with an exactness not likely to be accidental the sublime lines in Juvenal's thirteenth satire (223-6), where he describes the agonies of a terror-stricken conscience under the same circumstances. Nor can we attribute to mere coincidence the terse translation given of Juvenal's lines (*Sat.* x. 346-52) in *Antony and Cleopatra* (ii. 1) :—

We, ignorant of ourselves,  
Beg often our own harms, which the wise powers  
Deny us for our good : so find we profit  
By losing of our prayers.

So, too, in 1 *Henry IV.*, i. 2 :—

If all the year were playing holidays,  
To sport would be as tedious as to work ;  
But when they seldom come, they wished-for come.

Which is exactly

Facere hoc non possis quinque diebus  
Continuis, quia sunt talis quoque taedia vitae  
Magna. Voluptatis commendat rarior usus.  
(*Sat.* xi. 206-8.)

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We have again what seem to be reminiscences of Juvenal in *Cymbeline*, iii. 3, 82-3, cf. *Sat.* x. 25-7; in 1 *Henry IV.*, v. 4 (the reflections on Hotspur), and same satire, 168-73, and many other passages.

Of Persius, of whose satires also there was no translation, we are reminded in *Hamlet*, v. 1.

From her fair and unpolluted flesh  
May violets spring.

Nunc non e tumulo fortunatâque favillâ  
Nascentur violæ ?

(*Sat.* i. 39-40);

and again in iv. 7, ll. 29-32 are apparently suggested by Persius, ii. 29-30, while in *Macbeth's*

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time,  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death

(v. 5)

we have but a noble paraphrase of Persius, *Sat.* v. 66-9 :—

“Cras hoc fiet.” Idem cras fiet. “Quid? quasi magnum  
Nempe diem donas.” Sed quum lux altera venit,  
Jam cras hesternum consumimus. Ecce aliud cras  
Egerit hos annos et semper paulum erit ultra.

It is difficult to believe that Shakespeare had not read Lucretius, and of Lucretius there was no translation until long after the Elizabethan age. No parallels indeed can be pointed out which may not be mere coincidences but cumulatively they are very remarkable, and they are to be found in the case of passages which could

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scarcely have failed to impress him. Thus the exquisitely pathetic picture of the heifer hunting with lowings after its butchered calf (Lucretius, ii. 352-60) appears in *2 Henry VI.*, iii. 1, 210-6; the piteous helplessness of the newborn baby greeting with a wail the world of misery into which it has been cast (v. 223-7) is represented with literalness in *Lear*, iv. 6, and seems to be remembered in *Macbeth*, i. 7, 21. The Duke's speech in *Measure for Measure*, iii. 1, is nothing but the quintessence of Lucretius' similar fortification against the fear of death (v. 914-65), while Claudio's terrors condense partly Lucretius, *Id.*, 883-5, and partly Virgil, *Æn.* vi. 740-3; the dirge in *Cymbeline* is a variation of the same philosophy, but see the essay on *Shakespeare and Montaigne*, pp. 291-3. Again, in Ariel's Song in the *Tempest*, "Nothing of him that doth fade," etc., is a most exquisite adaptation of Lucretius, ii. 1002-6, while the constant process in nature of dissolution and re-combination is continually dwelt on by Shakespeare, always in passages closely recalling Lucretius (see Friar Lawrence's soliloquy, *Romeo and Juliet*, ii. 3, a couplet of which, 9-10, is a literal version of Lucretius, v. 257-9:—

. . . Pro parte suâ, quodcumque alid auget  
 Redditur . . . . .  
 Omniparens eadem rerum commune sepulcrum ;

Timon's soliloquy, *Timon of Athens*, iv. 3). What

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appear to be undoubted reminiscences of ii. 20-39 permeate Henry V.'s soliloquy (*Henry V.*, iv. 1), as well as the conclusion of Henry VI.'s (3 *Henry VI.*, ii. 5). And we have certainly the note of Lucretius, see particularly v. 306-18, in Sonnets lxiv., lxv., where the passage is almost translated, while it is echoed in *Lear* (iv. 6) :—

O ruin'd piece of Nature! *This great world*  
*Shall so wear out to naught,*

and again in the great passage in the *Tempest*, iv. 1.

In Shakespeare's time there was no translation of the fragments of Cicero's *De Republicâ*, or of Saint Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, where the passage to which I am about to refer is quoted. In the second scene of the first act of *Henry V.* occur these lines :—

For Government, though high, and low, and lower,  
Put into parts, doth keep in one concert;  
Congreeing in a full and natural close,  
Like Musike.

Can any one doubt that Theobald was perfectly right in maintaining that this was borrowed from Cicero's *De Republicâ*, ii. 42?—

Sic ex summis, et mediis, et infimis interjectis ordinibus, ut sonis, moderatâ ratione civitas, consensu dissimiliorum concinit; et quae harmonia a musicis dicitur in cantu, ea est in civitate concordia.

And now we come to what seems to me conclusive proof not only that Shakespeare read Latin but that he read the Greek classics in the Latin versions. In *Troilus and Cressida* (Act iii.

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sc. 3) is the following passage, too long to quote entirely, so I give what is material as an illustration :—

*Ulysses.* A strange fellow here  
Writes me: That man . . . . .

. . . . . Feels not what he owes but by reflection.

*Achilles.* This is not strange, Ulysses,  
The beauty that is borne here in the face  
The bearer knows not, but commends itself  
To other's eyes; nor doth the eye itself,  
That most pure spirit of sense behold itself  
Not going from itself, but eye to eye oppos'd  
Salutes each other, etc. . . . .  
. . . . .

*Ulysses.* I do not strain at the position,  
It is familiar, but *at the author's drift.*  
Who, etc.

Now, of all the myriad commentators on Shakespeare, no one, so far as I know, has pointed out that the "strange fellow" is Plato, and that the reference is to a passage in the *First Alcibiades*.<sup>1</sup> I give a literal version of the most material portions of the passage :—

*Socrates.* You have observed, then, that the face of him who looks into the eye of another appears visible to himself in the eye-sight of the person opposite to him. \* \* \* \* An eye, therefore, beholding an eye and looking into that in the eye which is most perfect, and which is the instrument of vision, would thus see itself? \* \* \* \* Then,

<sup>1</sup> Mr. John M. Robertson, in his *Montaigne and Shakspeare*, pp. 62-3, suggests that the passage was derived from Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, bk. v. ch. viii.-x. and bk. vi. ch. ii.-iii., and that it was accessible to Shakespeare in Golding's translation, 1578. But there is not the smallest parallel in the passages cited from Seneca.

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if the eye is to see itself, it must look at the eye and at that part of the eye in which the virtue of the eye resides, and which is like herself. \* \* \* \* Nor should we know that we were the persons to whom anything belonged, if we did not know ourselves.

So, too, the lines which follow :—

No man is the lord of anything  
Though in and of him there be much consisting  
Till he communicates his parts to others,

are derived from an earlier paragraph in the dialogue, "When a person is able to impart his knowledge to another, that surely proves his own understanding of any matter."<sup>1</sup> And, curiously enough, there seems to be another reminiscence of this dialogue in the play (Act iii. sc. 2) :—

O that I thought it could be in a woman  
· · · · ·  
To keep her constancy in plight and youth,  
Outliving beauty's outward, with a mind  
That doth renew swifter than blood decays.

Cf. *Socrates*. He who loves your soul is the true lover.

*Alcibiades*. That is the necessary inference.

*Socrates*. The lover of the lady goes away when the flower of youth fades. \* \* \* \* But he who loves the soul goes not away (p. 131).

Now, Plato was accessible only in Shakespeare's time through the Latin version, namely, the complete works translated by Ficino, published at Bâle in 1551, or in another edition of Ficino's version published at Venice in 1581 (in Colophon, dated 1570), or in the translation by Janus Cornarius, published at Bâle in 1561, though this

<sup>1</sup> See the whole passage, *Alcibiades*, I. pp. 132-3.



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particular dialogue may have been brought to his notice by a beautifully printed quarto published at Paris in 1560 (*Platonis Alcibiades Primus; vel De Naturâ hominis. Marcilio Ficino Interprete. Paris, 1560*). The sub-title, it may be added, would be likely to attract him to it.

Nor can there be any reasonable doubt that the famous passage in the *Merchant of Venice*, v. 1,

Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it (63-5),

was suggested to him by the Latin version of Plato's *Republic*, x. 610-1; see particularly the comparison of the matter-clogged soul to the sea-god Glaucus.

So much for classical works, which were not accessible to Shakespeare in English translations. We have now to consider his relation to works which had been translated into English, and which, therefore, he may have read in his own language. With regard to Plutarch, it is of course quite clear that he went no further than North's version of Amyot's French, and this is the only instance in which Farmer has made out his case. There remain, to confine ourselves to works with all of which he was acquainted, and with some of which he was familiar, the *Æneid* of Virgil, the *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides* of Ovid, the comedies of Terence, and the tragedies of Seneca. Now, in all cases where he refers to these works, or has borrowed or adapted from

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them, it is at least as probable, and this may be maintained with confidence, that he had the originals in his hands or in his memory, as that he had the English versions. Take Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, on which he is habitually drawing. Mr. Spencer Baynes was the first to point out that Shakespeare derived the name Titania from his knowledge of the Latin original, where it is always used as an epithet, and an epithet which Golding invariably translates by a periphrasis, the word itself nowhere occurring in Golding's version. As a test passage let us take the famous adaptation in the *Tempest* (Act v. sc.1):—

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,  
 . . . . . by whose aid,  
 Weak masters though ye be, I have bedimm'd  
 The noon-tide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds.  
 . . . . . To the dread rattling thunder  
 Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak  
 With his own bolt: the strong-bas'd promontory  
 Have I made shake; and by the spurs pluck'd up  
 The pine and cedar: graves at my command,  
 Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd and let them forth  
 By my so potent art.

This passage, according to Farmer, owes everything to Golding alone; Golding's version of the original (*Metamorphoses*, vii. 197-206) is:—

Ye ayres and windes, ye elves of hills, of brookes, of woodes  
 alone  
 Of standing lakes, and of the night, approche ye everye one,  
 Through help of whom, (the crooked bankes much wonder-  
 ing at the thing)  
 I have compelled streames to run cleare backward to their  
 spring.

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By charms I make the calm seas rough, and make the rough  
seas playne,

And cover all the sky with cloudes, and chace them thence  
again.

By charms I raise and lay the windes, etc. . . .

And from the bowels of the earth both stones and trees do  
draw.

Whole woodes and forests I remove, I make the mountaines  
shake

And e'en the earth itself to moane and fearfully to quake.

I call up dead men from their graves \* \* \* \* \*

Our sorcerie dimmes the morning faire, and darks the sun  
at noone.

Beside this place the original:—

Auraeque, et venti, montesque, amnesque, lacusque,

Dique omnes nemorum, Dique omnes noctis, adeste:

Quorum ope, quum volui, ripis mirantibus, amnes

In fontes rediere suos: concussaue sisto,

Stantia concutio cantu freta: nubila pello

Nubilaque induco: ventos abigoque, vocoque:

Vivaque saxa, suâ convulsaue robora terrâ,

Et sylvas moveo; jubeoque tremiscere montes,

Et mugire solum, manesque exire sepulcris.

From this it will be clear that if Shakespeare used Golding's version—and this seems likely from the opening line—he used also the original. There is nothing in Golding corresponding to the original in “suâ convulsaue robora terrâ,” which he omits entirely, but Shakespeare accurately recalls it in “*rifted* Jove's stout *oak*”; while the touch in “op'd and *let them forth*,” unfolds the meaning of “exire” which Golding does not; so again Shakespeare represents “voco”—“call'd forth,” which Golding altogether misses. How

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admirably, it may be added, has Shakespeare caught the colour, ring, and rhythm of the original, and how utterly are they missed in the lumbering homeliness of Golding.

There is another test passage in *Cymbeline*. Pisanio's account of the sailing away of Posthumus and the remarks of Imogen (i. 3) are no doubt, as Steevens observes, a reminiscence of the passage in the eleventh book of the *Metamorphoses* (460-71), describing Halcyone watching the departure of Ceyx. But a comparison of Shakespeare's narrative with Golding and Ovid will show that he was much more likely to have been thinking of the original than of the version; and the same will apply to the use which he has made of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Again Ovid is five times quoted by him in the original. A couplet from the *Amores*, i. 15, 35-6 is prefixed as a motto to *Venus and Adonis*; a couplet from the *Heroides*, i. 33-4 is quoted in the *Taming of the Shrew*, iii. 1; a line from the *Heroides*, ii. 66, in 3 *Henry VI.*, i. 3; part of a verse from *Metamorphoses*, i. 150, in *Titus Andronicus*, iv. 3. It is not necessary to cite further illustrations of Shakespeare's use either of Ovid or of other classical authors in Latin, though it would be easy to multiply them. These are typical, and the impression which they and scores of other passages make is, that Shakespeare was writing not with any direct or perhaps conscious intention of

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imitating, or even with the original before him, but with reminiscences of it recurring more or less vividly to his memory.

I hope I have now adduced sufficient evidence to prove that Shakespeare was acquainted, and acquainted in the original, with some of the chief Latin poets. I have next to show that through the medium of the Latin language the Greek classics were accessible to him, and that through this medium he was more or less familiar with those Greek classics who would be likely to attract him—namely, the dramatists. Aeschylus had been literally translated into Latin by Joannes Sanravius in 1555, in an edition printed at Bâle (*Aeschyli, Poetae vetustissimi, Tragediae sex quot extant, summâ fide ac diligentia e Graeco in Latinum sermonem utriusque linguae tironibus ad verbum conversae MDLV.*). Of Sophocles there were several translations. In 1543 appeared at Venice the first Latin translation, with brief marginal notes. In 1549 a literal version of the seven tragedies, containing brief introductions to each play, “ad utilitatem juventutis quae studiosa est Graecae,” and dedicated to our Edward VI., was published at Frankfort. This was succeeded by another translation of the seven tragedies, published at Paris in 1557. Next year the seven tragedies were translated into Latin verse, the dialogue in Iambic senarii, the choruses into Trochaic, Iambic, or Anapaestic dimeters, with marginal comments and elaborate

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stage directions, and, at the end of the volume, by way of appendix, is inserted, under the title of "Sophoclis Sententiae," a collection of proverbs and striking passages selected from the plays—parallels to many of which occur in Shakespeare. In 1597 another complete translation, this time a literal version by Vitus Winsemius, appeared at Paris.

Of Euripides, between 1546 and 1597, there were four complete Latin translations, three of them with the Greek on the opposite page. One of them, that published in 1558, has a succinct running commentary on the margin. In addition to these, appeared, printed at Bâle in 1559, Michael Neander's *Aristologia Euripidea*, a collection of extracts from Euripides chosen principally for aphorisms and moral lessons, with the Greek in the centre of each page, a literal Latin translation on one margin, and an elucidatory commentary on the other. In addition to these were printed in three charming little volumes, published in 1567, by Henry Stephens, *Select Tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, namely, the *Prometheus Vincetus*, the *Ajax*, *Antigone*, and *Electra*, the *Hecuba*, the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Medea*, and *Alcestis*, and of each there is a double version, one a literal, the other in verse. All these versions are, it may be added, beautifully printed, so that their texts are a pleasure to the eye, and as many of them give succinct sketches of the

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plots of the plays as well as elucidatory notes, while the Latin of the literal versions is remarkably simple and lucid, it is in itself improbable, almost to the point of being incredible, that Shakespeare should not have had the curiosity to turn to them. Some of the most remarkable parallels in sentiment and reflection to be found between Shakespeare and the Greek dramatists are, however, to be traced, not to those dramas which have come down to us in their entirety, but to the fragments of the Greek tragic and comic poets. This, however, presents no difficulty. One of the most attractively printed and appointed volumes which issued from the classical presses of the sixteenth century is the Frankfort edition of Stobaeus (dated 1581), entitled *Loci Communes sacri et profani*, with the Greek on one page, and a literal Latin line for line translation on the page opposite. Aristophanes was accessible to him in a Latin translation printed at Bâle in 1539, *Aristophanis Comœdiæ undecim e Græco in Latinum ad verbum translatae Andrea Divo Justino-politano interprete*, and in at least four other versions; but beyond a few coincidences, which seem purely accidental, I find no trace in Shakespeare of any acquaintance with Aristophanes. And this is not, of course, surprising, as no translation could make dramas so essentially indigenous, and so penetrated with what is local and peculiar, interesting or even intelligible to any but professed

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scholars. Of Aristophanes' exquisite lyric vein he could, in the Latin versions, discern nothing.

That Shakespeare could easily have had access to these works, which we know from Ascham's correspondence were current in England, is certain. The collection of books was not only the fashion but the passion of the age. His friend Ben Jonson had one of the finest private libraries in England, so had Camden and Cotton, and their liberality in lending books was proverbial. He could have had books from the library of Southampton, and through Southampton from the libraries of others of the nobility. The magnificent collection of Parker at Lambeth would have been open to him, as well as the collection at Gresham College. There was the Queen's Library at Whitehall, well stored, according to Hentzner, who visited it in 1598, with Greek, Latin, Italian, and French books ("Graecis, Latinis, Italicis et Gallicis libris referta").<sup>1</sup> What afterwards formed the nucleus of the Bodleian at Oxford, which contains, by the way, an Aldine Ovid, with his name in autograph, to all appearance genuine, on the title-page, was, during the last decade of the sixteenth century, almost within a stone's throw of the Black Friar's Theatre. That he more than probably availed himself of the treasures thus accessible to him, I now propose to adduce evidence.

<sup>1</sup> *Itinerarium* (ed. 1617), p. 127.



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## II

### HAD SHAKESPEARE READ THE GREEK TRAGEDIES ?

In the first part of this essay I have endeavoured to prove that Shakespeare was familiar with the Latin language and with many of the Latin classics ; that this knowledge gave him access to the Greek classics, nearly all of whom had been popularised through Latin versions ; and that the evidence for concluding that he availed himself of what was thus accessible to him, and accessible in a double sense, is so ample and precise that it can scarcely fail to carry conviction. But before proceeding to the important question of his relation to the Attic dramatists, it may be well to give one more collateral illustration of his acquaintance with another branch of Greek poetry. In the sixteenth century no Greek poetry was more popular among scholars than the epigrams of the Anthology. Between 1494, when the *Editio Princeps* appeared, and 1600, edition after edition of selections from it issued from the continental presses, no less than twenty being recorded in the British Museum catalogue alone. After 1529, the Greek text was generally accompanied with a Latin translation, sometimes literal,

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sometimes in verse, and that Shakespeare had some knowledge of these versions seems certain. The sonnets, the dramas occasionally, and particularly *Romeo and Juliet*, abound in unmistakable reminiscences of these epigrams. Sonnets cliii. and cliv., for example, are adaptations of an epigram of Marianus (*Palatine Anthology*, ix. 637), which he must have read either in the Greek or in the Latin translation, as there was at that time, so far as is known, no English version.<sup>1</sup> The lines in *Romeo and Juliet*, v. 3—

Can I believe  
That unsubstantial death is amorous, etc.,

are almost a literal version of *Anthology*, vii. 221 ; thus in the Latin version, *Selecta Epigrammata*, p. 272 (Bâle, 1529)—

. . . Pluto, suavissimam amicam  
Cur rapis ? An veneris te quoque tela premunt ?

<sup>1</sup> In the *Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft*, vol. xiii., 1878, Herr Hertzberg claims to have been the first to have "discovered" this, and all succeeding Shakespearean scholars have credited him with the discovery. But a fact so obvious was not likely to have waited till 1878 for a German scholar to discover. It had been known long before Herr Hertzberg's time, had often been pointed out, and, indeed, was so notorious that Dr. Wellesley, in his *Anthologia Polyglotta* (1849), p. 93, printed sonnet cliv. without any remark, underneath the Greek original, as one of the versions. The earliest Latin version I can find is in the *Florilegium*, edited by Lubinus, Heidelberg, 1603. It is not included in the *Selecta Epigrammata*, published at Bâle, in 1529, as Mr. Sidney Lee asserts, following apparently Dr. Brandes, a perilous guide in Shakespearean matters.

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The couplet (*Id.*, v. 1)—

Her body sleeps in Capel's monument,  
And her immortal part with angels dwells,

is nearly a translation of the epitaph on Plato in the same collection, *Selecta Epigrammata* (1529).

Corpus habet gremio contectum terra Platonis ;  
Mens sed habet superûm tecta beata Deûm (p. 296).

So the epigram describing the miseries of life, including the "law's delays" (*Id.* p. 21), recalls Hamlet's famous soliloquy, while the epigram about the marriage festivities being turned into funeral dole<sup>1</sup> (*Id.* p. 291) and that about virginity and the wrong inflicted on the world by the beautiful not having children (*Id.* p. 34) are echoed in *Romeo and Juliet*, in the *Sonnets*, and in *Venus and Adonis*. In an epigram distinguishing between love and passion (*Id.* p. 61) we may possibly, too, have the germ of the same distinction which is so powerfully and beautifully worked out in *Venus and Adonis* (792-804). But parallels swarm; and, even if we resolve two-thirds of them into mere coincidences, are collectively too remarkable to be the result of accident. We come now to the most important part of this enquiry.

<sup>1</sup> This beautiful epigram is not in the *Selecta Epigrammata*, but is included with a literal Latin version in the *Florilegium*, edited by Lubinus, in 1603 (p. 467); and almost certainly, therefore, like the Marianus Epigram, appeared in one of the numerous collections between 1520 and 1603.

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In dealing with Shakespeare's probable obligations to the Greek dramatists, we have obviously to be on our guard against three things. We must not admit as evidence any parallels in sentiment and reflection which, as they express commonplaces, are likely to be mere coincidences, such as the following :—

QUEEN. Good Hamlet . . .

Do not, for ever, with thy veiled lids  
Seek for thy noble father in the dust :  
Thou know'st, 'tis common ; all, that live, must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity.

KING. But, you must know, your father lost a father ;  
That father lost his, etc. (*Hamlet*, i. 2) ;

and the consolation offered to Electra by the Chorus in Sophocles' *Electra*, 1171-4 :—

θνητοῦ πέφυκας πατρὸς, Ἥλέκτρα, φρόνει,  
θνητὸς δ' Ὀρέστης ὥστε μὴ λιβαν στένε,  
πᾶσιν γὰρ ἡμῶν τοῦτ' ὀφείλεται παθεῖν

(Remember, Electra, that thou art the child of a mortal sire, and mortal was Orestes ; grieve not therefore excessively, this is a debt which all of us must pay) ;

or

Since doubting things go ill often hurts more  
Than to be sure they do (*Cymbeline*, Act i. sc. 7) ;

though exactly Sophocles' :—

τὸ μὴ πυθέσθαι, τοῦτό μ' ἀλγύνειεν ἄν.  
τὸ δ' εἰδέναι τί δεινόν ; (*Trachiniae*, 458-9)

(Not to know the fact, that it is would pain me, but to know it what terror is there in that ?) ;

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and Euripides' :—

Ἦ πον τὸ μέλλον ἐκφοβεῖ καθ' ἡμέραν  
ὡς τοῦ γε πάσχειν τοῦπιὸν μείζον κακόν (Frag. of *Andromeda*)

(Certainly it is that which is to come strikes us every day with fear, for an evil that is coming upon us is more terrible than the actual experience of it) ;

or 3 *Henry VI.*, i. 1 :—

Didst thou never hear  
That things ill-got had ever bad success?

though exactly Sophocles' *Oed. Col.*, 1026–7 :—

τὰ γὰρ δόλω  
τῶ μὴ δικάϊω κτήματ' οὐχὶ σώζεται

(For things obtained by unjust craft are never ours for long) ;

or 2 *Henry IV.*, Act i. sc. 1 :—

The first bringer of unwelcome news  
Hath but a losing office,

a sentiment repeated in *Antony and Cleopatra*, ii. 8, in *King John*, iii. 1, which is exactly Aeschylus, *Persae*, 249 :—

κακὸν μὲν πρῶτον ἀγγέλλειν κακά

('Tis an evil thing to be the first to announce evils) ;

and Sophocles, *Antigone*, 277 :—

στέργει γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἀγγελὸν κακῶν ἐπιῶν

(No one loves a messenger of evil tidings) ;

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or *Measure for Measure*, iv. 4 :—

Alack ! when once our grace we have forgot,  
Nothing goes right ;

and Sophocles, *Philoctetes*, 902-3 :—

ἅπαντα δυσχέρεια, τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν  
ὅταν λιπῶν τις δρῶ τὰ μὴ προσεικότα

(All goes ill when a man having forsaken his true nature  
does that which becomes him not) ;

or *Titus Andronicus*, iv. 3 :—

Those wounds heal ill  
That men do give themselves ;

and Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, 1230-1 :—

Τῶν δὲ πημονῶν  
μάλιστα λυποῦσ' αἱ φανῶσ' ἀθάλρετοι

(And those griefs do smart the most which men have  
plainly brought on themselves) ;

or 2 *Henry IV.*, iii. 2 :—

Thrice is he arm'd that hath his quarrel just ;

and *Oed. Col.*, 880 :—

τοῖς τοι δίκαιοις χῶ βραχὺς νικᾷ μέγαν.

(In a just cause even the weak vanquishes the strong) ;

or *Macbeth*, iii. 4 :—

It will have blood ; they say, blood will have blood ;

and *Choephoroe*, 400-3 :—

. . . νόμος μὲν φονίας σταγόνας  
χυμένας ἐς πέδον ἄλλο προσαιτεῖν  
αἷμα.

(A law there is, that bloody drops poured out on earth  
will have blood too.)

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Nor should we lay any stress on curiously close similarities of expression, such as *Hamlet*, i. 2 :—

He was a man, take him for all in all,  
I shall not look upon his like again ;

and *Trachiniae*, 810–11 :—

πάντων ἄριστον ἄνδρα τῶν ἐπὶ χθονὶ  
κτείνας, ὁποῖον ἄλλον οὐκ ὄψει ποτέ

(Having slain the noblest man of men on earth whose like thou shalt never see again) ;

or *Lear*, iv. 4 :—

I pray you, father, being weak, seem so ;

and Euripides, *Troades*, 729 :—

μήτε σθένουσα μηδὲν ἰσχύειν δόκει

(And being weak seem weak) ;

or *Id.*, iii. 2 :—

I am a man  
More sinn'd against than sinning ;

and *Oedip. Col.*, 266–7 :—

τὰ γ' ἔργα μου  
πεπονθότ' ἐστὶ μᾶλλον ἢ δεδρακότα

(Mine acts at least have been in suffering rather than in doing) ;

or *Id.*, i. 1 :—

Time shall unfold what plaited cunning hides ;

and Sophocles, *Frag.* 280 :—

ὁ πάνθ' ὄρων  
. . . . . πάντ' ἀναπτύσσει χρόνος

(Time that sees all unfolds all) ;

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or of the offered flowers in *Cymbeline*, iv. 3 :—

The ground that gave them first has them again  
(and cf. too *Romeo and Juliet*, i. 2), and *Choe-  
phoroe*, 127-8 :—

καὶ γαῖαν αὐτήν, ἣ τὰ πάντα τίκτεται  
θρέψασά τ' αὐθις τῶνδε κύμα λαμβάνει

(And earth itself which is the mother and nurse of all  
takes again the increase of them) ;

or *Rape of Lucrece*, l. 1837 :—

By Heaven's fair sun that breeds the fat earth's store ;  
and *Agamemnon*, 616 :—

πλὴν τοῦ τρέφοντος Ἑλλίου χθονὸς φύσιν

(Save the sun who nourishes earth's brood) ;

or *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ii. 4 :—

His years but young, but his experience old ;  
and *Seven against Thebes*, 618 :—

γέροντα τὸν νοῦν, σάρκα δ' ἠβῶσαν φέρει

(Old is the mind, but young the frame he bears) ;

or *Troilus and Cressida*, iv. 5 :—

Speaking in deeds and deedless in his tongue ;  
and *Philoctetes*, 97 :—

γλῶσσαν μὲν ἀργόν, χεῖρα δ' εἶχον ἐργάτιν

(A deedless tongue I had and deedful hand) ;

or *Much Ado about Nothing* :—

Nor let no comforter delight mine ear  
But such as one whose wrongs do suit with mine.



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and Sophocles, *Frag.*, 814:—

ὅς μὴ πέπονθε τὰμὰ μὴ βουλευέτω

Let not him who has not suffered what I have give me counsel.)

And yet such similarities of expression as the following are cumulatively very remarkable. Thus we have “the lazy foot of time” (*As You Like It*, iii. 2), exactly *δαρὸν χρόνου πόδα*, Euripides’ *Bacchae*, 889: “the service of the foot being once gangren’d,” *Coriolanus*, iii. 1; ἡδιστον δ’ ἔχων ποδῶν ὑπηρέτημα (Sophocles, *Electra*, 1349–50): “the belly-pinched wolf” (*Lear*, iii. 1); κοιλογάστορες λύκοι (*Septem.*, 1037–8): “his dog-hearted daughters” (*Lear*, iv. 3); Ἄ κυνόφρων (*Choeph.*, 610): “blossoms of your love” (*L. L. Lost*, v. 2); ἔρωτος ἄνθος (*Ag.*, 729): “the anvil of my sword” (*Coriolanus*, iv. 5); λόγχης ἄκμονες (*Persae*, 51): “my prophetic soul” (*Hamlet*, i. 5); πρόμαντις θυμὸς (Euripides, *Androm.*, 1075): “he does sit in gold” (*Coriolanus*, v. 1); Homer’s χρυσόθρονος: “a sea of troubles” (*Hamlet*, iii. 1); κακῶν πέλαγος (*Persae*, 425, but the expression is more than once used in the Greek dramas): “my bosom’s lord sits lightly on his throne” (*Rom. and Jul.*, v. 1); θάρσος ἴζει φρενὸς φίλον θρόνον (courage sits on my heart’s throne, *Agamemnon*, 954–5): “dark shall be my light” (*2 Henry VI.*, ii. 4); σκότος, ἐμὸν φάος (*Ajax*, 387): “an ill-divining soul” (*Rom. and Jul.*, iii. 5); κακόμαντις θυμὸς (*Persae*, 10): “my heart dances, but not for joy” (*Winter’s Tale*, i. 2); ὀρχεῖται δὲ

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καρδία (*Choephoroe*, 165): "my seated heart knocks at my ribs" (*Macbeth*, i. 3), καρδία δὲ φόβῳ φρένα λακτίζει (*Prom.*, 900): "This bank and shoal of Time" (*Id.*, i. 7); βίου βραχὺν ἰσθμόν, "life's narrow isthmus" (Sophocles, *Frag.* 146). "We are such stuff as dreams are made of" (*Temp.*, iv. 1); Aeschylus also of men, ὄνειράτων ἀλίγκιοι μορφαῖσι (*Prom.*, 456-7): "Proverb'd with a grandsire phrase" (*Rom. and Jul.*, i. 4); τριγέρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ, "So says a thrice-old-man proverb" (*Choephoroe*, 305): "He is *thricea villain*" (*As you like it*, i. 1); τριδουλος, "thrice a slave" (*Oed. Rex*, 1062), and the very remarkable reminiscence of the Greek νομηνία in *Timon of Athens*, ii. 2, where "the succession of new days this month" is assigned as the time for the payment of a debt; "muddy vesture of decay" (*M. of Ven.*, v. 1); σαρκὸς περιβόλαια (*Hercules Furens*, 1269). So of Echo, "the babbling gossip of the air" (*Twelfth Night*, i. 5), exactly Sophocles' ἀθροστομος ἀχὼ (*Philoctetes*, 186). All these may be of course, and most of them almost certainly are, mere coincidences.

Still less should identity of sentiment under similar circumstances be cited as evidence of imitation. Thus in 3 *Henry VI.*, Act. v. sc. 6, Gloucester, playing on the idea of destiny, says to Henry as he stabs him:—

For this among the rest was I ordained,  
which is just what Orestes says to Clytemnestra, *Choephoroe*, 897:—

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καὶ τόνδε τοίνυν μοῖρ' ἐπόρσυνεν μόρον.

(Well then it was fate too prepared this doom [for thee].)

When Hamlet hesitates to kill his stepfather because :—

The spirit that I have seen may be the devil,  
he exactly recalls Orestes' scruples under similar  
circumstances :—

ἀρ' αὐτ' ἀλάστωρ εἶπ' ἀπικασθεὶς θεῶ ;

(But was it not some demon in the likeness of a god en-  
joined it? i.e. the revenge for his father's murder.)

(Euripides' *Electra*, 979.)

So too when Edgar says in *Lear*, iv. 2 :—

A man made tame to fortune's blows,  
Who, by the art of knowing and feeling sorrows,  
Am pregnant to good pity,

he is simply condensing a translation of Theseus' words to Oedipus in the *Oedipus Coloneus*, 560-6. And when in *Richard II.*, v. 2, the Duchess says to York about her son :—

Hadst thou groan'd for him,  
As I have done, thou'dst be more pitiful,

she makes precisely the same remark as Clytemnestra makes in Sophocles' *Electra*, 533-4, just as when Hermione (*Winter's Tale*, iii. 2) says :—

Now, my liege,  
Tell me what blessings I have here alive,  
That I should fear to die? Therefore proceed,

she almost translates what Antigone says to Cleon, *Antigone*, 461-4 :—

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εἰ δὲ τοῦ χρόνου  
 πρόσθεν θανοῦμαι, κέρδος αὐτ' ἐγὼ λέγω.  
 ὅστις γὰρ ἐν πολλοῖσιν ὡς ἐγὼ κακοῖς  
 ζῆ', πῶς ὄδ' οὐχὶ κατθανῶν κέρδος φέρει;

(But if I am to die before my time, I count that gain, for how would any one who lives as I do in the midst of many evils not get gain by death?)

So, too, in *Romeo and Juliet*, iv. 5, when Capulet says:—

O son, the night before thy wedding day  
 Hath death lain with thy bride. See there she lies  
 . . . Deflower'd by him, etc.

how exactly does he recall the speech of Agamemnon in the *Iphig. in Aulis*, 460–1:—

τὴν δ' αὖτάλαιναν παρθένον, τί παρθένον;  
 "Αἰδῆς νιν, ὡς ἔοικε, νυμφεύσει τάχα.

(But as for this hapless maiden—Maiden, indeed?—Hades methinks will soon be her bridegroom.)

There is also a remarkable parallel in *Macbeth* (see also *Ant. and Cleopatra*, ii. 5), where Ross announces to Macduff the murder of his wife and children:—

*Macd.* How does my wife?  
*Ross.* Why, well.  
*Macd.* And all my children?  
*Ross.* Why, well, too.

In the *Troades* of Euripides, 268, Talthybius announces to Hecuba the sacrifice of Polyxena by exactly the same ambiguous euphemism. The mother asks where her daughter is, Talthybius replies:—

εὐδαιμόνιζε παῖδα σὴν· ἔχει καλῶς.

(Account thy child happy: it is well with her.)

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This may of course be a biblical reminiscence of 2 Kings iv. 26.

Nor would it be safe to lay stress on similarities, however striking they may be, in metaphorical expression. Thus, *Measure for Measure*, ii. 4 :—

Coin Heav'n's image  
In stamps that are forbid ;

and Aeschylus, *Supplikes*, 278–9 :—

Κύπριος χαρακτήρ τ' ἐν γυναικείοις τύποις  
εἰκῶς πέπληκται

(The Cyprian impress hath been stamped to the life in women's moulds) ;

and in the same play (iii. 1), where the Duke says of life :—

Thou art not certain  
For thy complexion shifts to strange effects  
After the moon,

Though Sophocles has the same simile :—

ἀλλ' οὐμὸς ἀεὶ πότμος . . . .  
. . . . . μεταλλάσσει φύσιν  
ὥσπερ σελήνης δ' ὄψις εὐφρόνας δύο  
στήναι δύναιτ' ἂν οὔποτ' ἐν μορφῇ μιᾷ

(My fortune is ever shifting its nature, as the moon's face cannot for two nights together rest in one form.) (*Fragments*, Dindorf, 713.)

or “the blanket of the dark,” (*Macbeth*, i. 5), so strangely like Sophocles' *νύξ κατουλαίς*, “night that covers as with a rug” (*Frag.*, 383), or “woven wings” for ships' sails (*Merch. of Ven.*,

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i. 1), recalling Aeschylus' λινόπτερα ναυτίλων ὀχήματα, seamen's linen-winged cars (*Prom. Vinct.*, 476); or the very remarkable (*Coriolanus*, iii. 2):—

Now humble, as the ripest mulberry  
That will not hold the handling;

and Aeschylus, *Frag.*, 249:—

'Ανὴρ δ' ἐκείνος ἦν πεπαίτερος μύρων

(He was a man riper (or perhaps softer) than mulberries);

or *Hamlet*, iii. 4:—

Skin and film the ulcerous place,  
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,  
Infects unseen,

which is an admirable paraphrase of Sophocles (*Oed. Rex*, 1396):—

κάλλος κακῶν ὑπουλον

or, again, *Hamlet*, iii. 4:—

These words like daggers enter in mine ears;

and Aeschylus, *Choeph.*, 373-4:—

τοῦτο διαμπερὲς οὖς  
ἴκεθ' ἄπερ τε βέλος.

(This went right through my ear just like a dart.)

Nor may such remarkable parallels as the following point to more than coincidence:—

To you your father should be as a god. (*M. S. N. D.*, i. 1.)

Νόμιζε σαυτῷ τοὺς γονεῖς εἶναι θεούς.

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(Consider that thy parents are gods to thee.)  
(Menander, *Senten. Singular.* in Stobaeus.)

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all. (*Hamlet*,  
iii. 1.)

ὁ συνιστορῶν αὐτῷ τι, κἂν ᾗ θρασύτατος,  
ἢ σύνεσις αὐτὸν δειλότατον εἶναι ποιεῖ.

(He who is conscious of aught, e'en though he be the  
boldest of men, conscience makes him the most cowardly.)  
(Menander quoted in *Stobaeus. Serm.* xxiv.)

But "fat paunches have lean pates" (*L. L. L.*,  
i. 1) is undoubtedly from the anonymous Greek  
proverb:—

παχεῖα γαστήρ λεπτόν οὐ τίκτει νόον

(Fine wit is never the offspring of a fat paunch);

and the line in 3 *Henry VI.*, i. 2, "For a king-  
dom any oath may be broken," as certainly a  
reminiscence of Euripides' *Phoenissae*, 524-5:—

εἴπερ γὰρ ἀδικεῖν χρή, τυραννίδος πέρι  
κάλλιστον ἀδικεῖν

(If indeed one must do injustice, injustice done for sove-  
reignty's sake is honourablest);

though this may have come through Seneca.  
"Imperia pretio quolibet constant bene, *Phoenis-  
sae*, 664. The words of Lafeu in *All's Well that  
Ends Well* (ii. 3):—

"We have our philosophical persons to make modern  
and familiar, things supernatural and causeless. Hence is  
it that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into  
seeming knowledge when we should submit ourselves to an  
unknown fear,"

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are almost a translation of *Frag.* clviii. of Euripides :—

Δυσδαίμων  
ὅς τάδε λεύσων θεὸν οὐχὶ νοεῖ,  
μετεωρολόγων δ' ἐκάς ἔρριψεν  
σκολιάς ἀπάτας, ὧν ἀτηρὰ  
γλῶσσ' εἰκοβολεῖ περὶ τῶν ἀφανῶν,  
οὐδὲν γνώμης μετέχουσα.

(Unhappy he, who looking on these things, discerns not God, and flings not far from him the crooked frauds of natural philosophers, whose accursed tongue babbles about unseen things and hath no wisdom.)

Again, the lines in *Hamlet* (i. 5) :—

Lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,  
Will sate itself in a celestial bed,  
And prey on garbage (*Hamlet*, i. 5);

a remark repeated in *Cymbeline* (i. 7) may have been suggested by a Fragment of Euripides quoted by Stobaeus, 61, p. 386 :—

κόρος δὲ πάντων, καὶ γὰρ ἐκ καλλιόνων  
λέκτροις ἐν αἰσχροῖς εἶδον ἐκπεπληγμένους·  
δαιτὸς δὲ πληρωθεὶς τις ἄσμενος πάλιν  
φαύλη διαίτη προσβαλὼν ἦσθη στόμα.

(Everything satiates, for I have seen men quitting honourable beds to revel madly in dishonourable; when satiated with a feast one gladly falls on inferior diet, and finds it smack sweetly.)

All places that the eye of heaven visits  
Are to a wise man ports and happy havens.  
(*Rich. II.*, i. 3.)

"Ἀπασα δὲ χθὼν ἀνδρὶ γενναίῳ πατρίς.

(To a noble man every land is his fatherland.)  
(Euripides, *Frag.*, ex *Incert. Trag.*, xxxviii.)



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So too in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, i. 1 :—

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind.

Euripides says precisely the same thing of love in a passage which is, in other respects, remarkably parallel to the passage where this line occurs; speaking of its power of transforming defects into beauties, he adds,

οὐ γὰρ ὀφθαλμὸς τὸ ταῦτα κρίνον, ἀλλὰ νοῦς.

(For it is not the eye that judges these things but the mind.)  
(*Frag.*, ex *Incert. Trag.*, clii.)

Again, Falstaff's famous aphorism, "The better part of valour is discretion" (1 *Henry IV.*, v. 6) is only a humorously emphasised version of Euripides'

καὶ τοῦτό τοι τάνδρειον, ἡ προμηθία.

(And this too you must know is valour—foresight.)  
(*Supplices*, 510.)

Not less remarkable are parallels in idioms and in peculiarities of diction and rhythm which might be attributed partly to the influence of our classical drama, partly to the unfixed and experimental methods of composition characteristic of the Elizabethan poets, and partly to Shakespeare's own boundless fertility and plasticity of expression, but which might also have originated from direct imitation. The very remarkable Greekism "I'll trust by *leisure* him that mocks me once" (*Titus Andron.*, i. 2) has often been noticed; so, too, "Thou dost *talk nothing* to me"

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(*Temp.*, i. 2), exactly the Greek οὐδὲν λέγεις : “you must not put *another* scandal on him” (*Hamlet*, ii. 1), where “another” appears to be used, not in the ordinary sense of the word, but in the Greek sense which ἄλλος frequently bears, “particular.” Again, “I know you what you are,” *Lear*, i. 1. So, too, the phrase, “to the death,” in precisely the Greek sense, εἰς φθόρον, as an imprecation, “No—to the death! we will not move a foot” (*Love’s Labour’s Lost*, v. 2). So, too, the habitual qualification in emphasis of the comparative in adjectives, which Ben Jonson tells us in his *Grammar* sprang from an imitation of the Greek; and of the infinitive as a substantive, as “Nor has he with him *to supply* his life” (*Titus Andron.*, iv. 1); the multiplication of negatives, as in *Macbeth*, ii. 1, “Tongue nor heart cannot conceive nor name thee.” The suppression of the affirmation in dialogue is another Greekism almost as common in Shakespeare as in the Greek dramas, as, to take one illustration, in *Hamlet*, iii. 2:—

*Ham.* Will the King hear this piece of work?

*Pol.* And the Queen too.

Nothing could be more purely Greek than the dialogue in monostichs in *Richard III.* between Richard and Elizabeth in the fourth scene of the fourth act. We have the purely Greek note in couplets of which this (*Rom. and Jul.*, i. 1) is an illustration:—

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Pursu'd my humour, not pursuing his,  
And gladly shunn'd who gladly fled from me ;

and in such lines as those of which the following is an illustration (*Ham.*, i. 5) :—

Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd ;

curiously close, we may notice in passing, to *Antigone*, 1071 :—

ἄμοιρον, ἀκτέριστον, ἀνόσιον νέκυν.

(Unburied, unhonoured, unhallowed.)

How purely classical, with the note of Euripides, is the dialogue between Iris and Ceres in the fourth act of the *Tempest*. When, too, we compare many of the soliloquies and monologues in Shakespeare's dramas with those characteristics of the Greek tragedies, we cannot fail to be struck with their close resemblance in phrase and diction, in colour, tone, and ring. Take, for example, Romeo's last speech and compare it with Electra's lament over the urn in Sophocles' *Electra*, 1126–70 ; or Lady Macbeth's invocation to the "spirits that tend on mortal thoughts," with Medea's speech after Creon leaves her (*Medea*, 364–408), particularly the passage (line 395) beginning οὐ γὰρ μὰ τὴν δέσποιναν to the end ; or Cleopatra's last speech (*A. and C.*, v. 2) with Cassandra's speech in the *Agamemnon* (1226–65) beginning παπαῖ· οἶον τὸ πῦρ, etc.; or the soliloquy of Ajax, *Ajax*, 646–92, and the speech of Jocasta, *Phoenissae*, 528–85, with the orations of Aga-

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memnon, Nestor, and Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida*, i. 3; or the speeches of Othello, Act v. sc. 2, with the speeches of Hercules in the last part of the *Trachiniae*: and the numerous analogies of which these are typical.

Nor must we forget the many curious parallels between his plays on words; his studied use of paronomasia, of asyndeton, of onomatopoeia, of elaborate antithesis, of compound epithets, of subtle periphrasis; and, above all, his metaphors,—with those so peculiarly characteristic of the Attic dramas. It is indeed in the extraordinary analogies,—analogies in sources, in particularity of detail and point, and in relative frequency of employment, presented by his metaphors to the metaphors of the Attic tragedians, that we find the most convincing testimony of his familiarity with their writings.<sup>1</sup>

It is not likely that Shakespeare could read Greek with facility, but if he possessed enough of it to follow the original Latin version, as he probably did, he would not only be able to enrich his diction with its idioms and phraseology

<sup>1</sup> The writer of an interesting, but somewhat fanciful, article on *Shakespeare's Greek Names*, in the *Cornhill Magazine* for February, 1876, draws attention to the peculiar appropriateness, from an etymological point of view, of many of the Greek names of his *dramatis personae*, e.g. Ophelia, Autolycus, Desdemona, Apemantus. He also suggests that he coined Sycorax out of *σῦς*, a sow, and *κόραξ*, a raven. Ruskin's commentary on the irony implied in the name Ophelia (*ὠφέλεια*) is well known.

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but would acquire that *timbre* in style of which I have given illustrations.

It is time, however, to bring general and miscellaneous parallels between the Shakespearean drama and Greek tragedies—parallels in reflection, sentiment, and expression—to a conclusion, and though many scores of others could be added, for I have only given typical specimens of each group, I do not, as I have already said, cite them as positive proofs of imitation or of reminiscence on the part of Shakespeare. They may be mere coincidences. But if, on the other hand, further and more satisfactory evidence of Shakespeare's acquaintance with the Greek dramatists can be adduced, then, surely, such parallels will not be without importance as corroborative testimony. Let us now, therefore, narrow the area to a single drama, the *Ajax*. If Shakespeare had not read the *Ajax* and been influentially impressed by it, there is an end to all evidence founded on reference and parallelism. Reminiscences of it seem to haunt his dramas. First we have the reference in 2 *Henry VI.*, v. 1 :—

And now like Ajax Telamonius  
On sheep or oxen could I spend my fury ;

and in *Titus Andron.*, i. 2, in a scene evidently modelled on the contest between Teucer and Menelaus and Agamemnon about the burial of Ajax,

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The Greeks upon advice did bury Ajax  
That slew himself : and wise Laertes' son  
Did graciously plead for his funerals.

The lines in the speech of Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida*, i. 3, beginning :—

The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre, etc.

are a magnificent paraphrase of the lines in Ajax's soliloquy beginning :—

καὶ γὰρ τὰ δεινὰ καὶ τὰ καρτερώτατα  
τιμαῖς ὑπείκει, etc. (669 seqq.);

and in *Romeo and Juliet*, iii. 1 :—

O sweet Juliet,  
Thy beauty hath made me effeminate,  
And in my temper soften'd valour's steel,

we have apparently a reminiscence of the lines in the same soliloquy (*Ajax*, 650-3) :—

κἀγὼ γὰρ, ὅς τὰ δειν' ἐκαρτέρουν τότε,  
βαφῆ σίδηρος ὡς ἐθελύνθη στόμα  
πρὸς τῆσδε τῆς γυναικός.

(For even I who was once so wondrous firm, even as iron in the dipping, have had the keen edge of my temper softened by this woman's words.)

In Coriolanus' speech (*Cor.*, iv. 4),

O world, thy slippery turns, etc.,

we have at once an expansion and illustration

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of the remarks of Ajax, 678–84 ; while the words in Tecmessa's pathetic speech :—

οἱ γὰρ κακοὶ γνώμαισι τὰγαθὸν χεροῖν  
ἔχοντες οὐκ ἴσασι πρὶν τις ἐκβάλῃ

(For fools never know that they have a blessing in their hands till some one dash it from them)

find many echoes in Shakespeare too obvious to be cited. In 2 *Henry IV.*, iii., we have another passage :—

Things

As yet not come to life, which in their seeds  
And weak beginnings lie intreasured,  
Such things become the hatch and brood of time ;

which very closely recalls *Ajax*, 646–8 :—

ἅπανθ' ὁ μακρὸς ἀναρίθμητος χρόνος  
φύει τ' ἄδηλα καὶ φανέντα κρύπτεται

(All things doth long and countless time produce from darkness then bury again from light.)

And if we add the lines which follow in the same speech, *κούκ ἔστ' ἄελπτον*, etc., and place them beside *Sonnet cxv.* 5–8 :—

But reckoning time whose million'd accidents  
Creep in 'twixt vows, and change decrees of kings,  
Tan sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,  
Divert strong minds to the course of altering things,

—we see how near we are. The lines in *Macbeth*,  
iii. 2 :—

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Things without all remedy  
Should be without regard. What's done is done,

recall closely *Ajax*, 370-1 :—

τί δῆτ' ἂν ἀλγολίης ἐπ' ἐξεργασμένοις ;  
οὐ γὰρ γένοιτ' ἂν ταῦθ' ὅπως οὐχ ᾧδ' ἔχειν.

(Why grieve when deeds are past recall? it could never be that these things should be not what they are.)

In the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, v. 3, 1 :—

“To be slow in words is a woman's only duty, . . . place it for her chief virtue,”

is exactly [a remark repeated in another form in *Cymbeline* (ii. 3)]

γύναι, γυναιξὶ κόσμον ἢ σιγὴ φέρει.

(Woman, women's ornament is silence.) (*Ajax*, 293.)

Brutus's remark (*Julius Caesar*, ii. 1) :—

That we shall die we know; 'tis but the time,  
And drawing days out that men stand upon,

is precisely that of *Ajax* (475-6) :—

τί γὰρ παρ' ἡμᾶρ ἡμέρα τέρπειν ἔχει  
προσθεῖσα κἀναθείσα τοῦ γε κατθανεῖν ;

(What joy is there in day following day, as each but draws us on towards or keeps us back from death?)

When Antony cries :—

O sun, thy uprise shall I see no more,



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we are reminded of Ajax's (856-7):—

τὸν διφρευτὴν Ἥλιον προσενέπω  
πανύστατον δὴ κοῦποτ' αὐθις ὕστερον,

just as in Ajax's grim play on the tragical propriety of his name (430-4) we are reminded of John of Gaunt's similar play on his name in *Richard II.*, ii. 2.

αἰαῖ τίς ἄν ποτ' ᾤεθ' ὦδ' ἐπώνυμον  
τοῦμὸν ξυσοίσειν ὄνομα τοῖς ἐμοῖς κακοῖς;  
Αἰαῖ.

(“Alas!” “alas!” (αἰαῖ, αἰαῖ). Who could ever have thought that my name could fit so nicely with my woes?)

says the one;

Gaunt!  
O how that name befits my composition,  
Gaunt am I for the grave, gaunt as a grave,

exclaims the other, while both keep harping on the pun. The magnificent passage in *Titus Andron.*, iv. 4:—

The eagle suffers little birds to sing,  
And is not careful what they mean thereby,  
Knowing that with the shadow of his wing  
He can, at pleasure, stint their melody,

is precisely, with the substitution of an eagle for a vulture, *Ajax*, 167-72.

So, again, “dark shall be my light” (2 *Henry VI.*, ii. 4) seems an echo of Ajax's *ἰὼ σκότος, ἐμὸν*

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φάος (Ah, dark, my light); and Theseus' "hounds bred out of the Spartan breed, matched in mouth like bells with their tuneable cry," *M. S. N. D.*, iv. 1, look very like a reminiscence of the *κυνὸς, Λακαίνης βύσις* (the step of the Spartan hound) and the *φώνημα . . . κώδωνος Τυρσηνικῆς* (voice of a Tyrrhenian bell or clarion) of the opening lines of the *Ajax*. It is quite possible that the phrase, "night's candles are burnt out," in *Romeo and Juliet*, iii. 5, may be an adaptation suggested by the Latin version of

ἡνίχ' ἔσπεροι  
λαμπτήρες οὐκέτ' ἦθον

(when evening's lamps were no longer burning,)

and

Discourse fustian with one's own shadow  
(*Othello*, ii. 3),

an adapted reminiscence of a passage in the same speech (301-2):—

σκιᾶ τινι  
λόγους ἀνέσπα.

(He ranted out words to some shadow.)

So, too, in *Richard III.*, i. 1 :—

Grim-visag'd war hath smooth'd his wrinkled front  
looks like a mistranslation of l. 706 :—

ἔλυσεν αἰνὸν ἄχος ἀπ' ὀμμάτων "Ἀρης,

and to this mistranslation, it may be added, Shakespeare would be led by all the Latin ver-

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sions, Vitus Winsemius turning it, "dissolvit enim gravem dolorem ab oculis Mars"; Stephens in the *Selectae Tragoediae* paraphrasing it, "Nam tristis dolor furorque mitigatus est"; and Rottallerus, "tristes etenim abstersit ab oculis Mars violentus sollicitudines"; this last apparently being the version which Shakespeare followed. Nor must we omit to notice the conspicuous part which Ajax plays in *Troilus and Cressida*, and the fact that his distinguishing characteristics are precisely those on which Sophocles, for the purpose of enforcing the moral of his drama, lays most stress. There is, of course, not one of these parallels which, if taken separately, might not be mere coincidence—even accumulatively they may amount to nothing more—but surely it is not too much to say that probability, our only guide in such investigations as these, warrants a different conclusion.

But, it may be urged, if Shakespeare was acquainted with the Greek dramas he would have left unequivocal indications of that acquaintance with them by reproducing their form, by drawing with unmistakable directness on their *dramatis personae* for archetypes, by borrowing incidents, situations and scenes from them, or at least by directly and habitually referring to them. The answer to this is obvious. Of all playwrights who have ever lived Shakespeare appears to have been the most practical and the most conventional. The poet of all ages was

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pre-eminently the child of his own age. He belonged to a guild who spoke a common language, who derived their material from common sources, who cast that material in common moulds, and who appealed to a common audience. The Elizabethan drama was no exotic, but drew its vitality and nutriment from its native soil. The differences which separate Attic tragedy from Elizabethan are radical and essential. Had Shakespeare known the Greek plays by heart he could not have taken them for his models, or transferred, without recasting and reconstructing, a single scene from them. He had also to consider what appealed to his audience. The works of the Attic masters were as yet familiar only to scholars. Allusions to the legends of the houses of Atreus and of Labdacus would not have been popularly intelligible, and it is quite clear that Shakespeare, whatever concessions he may have made to it in his earlier works, abhorred pedantry. That he should, therefore, have given us in *Hamlet* so close an analogy to the story of the *Choephoroe* and of the *Electra* without either recalling or even referring to Orestes; that he should have pictured Lear and Cordelia without any allusion to Oedipus and Antigone, is not at all surprising. There is the same absence of reference to the Attic Tragedies both in Ben Jonson and in Chapman, but of the acquaintance of both these scholars with them there can be no doubt.

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I pass now from evidence which rests, if the reader pleases, on a comparatively low degree of probability to evidence which rests, I venture to submit, on probability in a very high degree. Assuming, for a moment, that Shakespeare was a student of the Greek dramatists, how should we expect him to be affected by them? He brought to their perusal, it must be remembered, an intellect and a genius amazing alike in receptivity, tenacity, and combinative power, as boundless in capacity as in attainment, having the plasticity and fertility of Nature herself, but with this peculiarity,—its creative energy was never self-evolved. The acorn developed into an oak, the spark became a conflagration, but another hand dropped the acorn, from another fire came the spark. To an obscure novel we owe Othello, to a prosy chronicle Macbeth; some tavern losel or dull playwright probably gave us Falstaff,<sup>1</sup> a stupid Grendon constable almost certainly gave us Dogberry. It was in the power of realizing a character, a scene, a story, already defined in embryo or sketched in outline, that Shakespeare's genius, as a creative artist, lay. This must be evident to anybody who follows the Roman plays in North's Plutarch, and the English Histories in Holinshed's Chronicles, *As you like it* in Lodge's

<sup>1</sup> The germ of Falstaff is, I think, though no one seems to have noticed it, to be found in a stupid comic character named Dericke in the *Famous Victories of Henry V.*

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*Rosalynde*, and the *Winter's Tale* in Greene's *Pandosto*.

Imagination and enthusiasm once kindled, all that nature, all that observation, all that study, that reflection had endowed and stored him with was brought into play, modifying, complicating, crowding the canvas with additional figures, broadening and expanding the plot with imported incidents and scenes, enriching the dialogue with all the glories of poetry and with all the treasures of aphoristic wisdom. It would be here that impressions made on his memory and on his imagination by the Greek dramas would be likely to be found, and here I cannot but think that they are found, always and necessarily modified, so much so sometimes as to be but faintly and doubtfully discernible, but so apparently undisguised at other times as to seem quite unmistakable.

Clytemnestra in the *Agamemnon* might well be the archetype of Lady Macbeth. Both possessed by one idea are, till its achievement, the incarnations of a murderous purpose. In both, the motive impulses are from the sexual affections. Both, without pity and without scruple, have nerves of steel and wills of iron before which husband and paramour cower in admiring awe, and yet in both beats the woman's heart; and the fine touches with which Aeschylus brings this out may well have arrested Shakespeare's attention. The profound hypocrisy of

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the one in her speeches to Agamemnon answers to that of the other in her speeches to Duncan. What the one expresses in "You shall put This night's great business into my despatch," and in "Give me the daggers," the other expresses in the awful speech in which she describes her murder of Agamemnon (*Agamem.*, 1372-98). Nor should we omit to notice a fine touch, common to both poets and so stupidly ridiculed by certain critics, the strained and high-flown rhetoric in which conscious insincerity expresses itself in Clytemnestra's speech beginning, ἔστιν θάλασσα (931-46), and in Macbeth's description of the scene of the murder :—

Here lay Duncan,  
His silver skin lac'd with his golden blood, etc. (ii. 1).

The preparations for the murder, the murder itself, and Lady Macbeth's suspense outside the chamber have a strong generic resemblance to the catastrophes of the *Choephoroe*, the *Electra* (of Sophocles), and the *Orestes*. The scene in *Troilus and Cressida* (v. 3), where Andromache, Cassandra, and Priam are trying to dissuade Hector from taking the field against Achilles, bears so close a resemblance, especially in the stress laid on dreams and prophecies, to the scene in the *Seven against Thebes* where the Chorus are imploring Eteocles not to go out against Polynices, that it is difficult to suppose the resemblance is due to mere coincidence.

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The Deianira of the *Trachiniae* lives again in the Desdemona of *Othello*; in both, the same meek, sweet character, strong only in resignation and might of love, for both, the same iron doom—to perish guiltless and hopeless amid the curses of all that was dear to them, the one by her own hand, the other by a husband's. Nor is this study the only reminiscence of the *Trachiniae*. The scenes after the arrival of Antony, in *Antony and Cleopatra* (iv. 10–13), where he supposes that he has been betrayed by Cleopatra, his frantic bursts of passion at her treachery, his furious desire for vengeance on her, his appeal to Eros to dispatch him, his sudden calmness on being informed that Cleopatra is dead, his recollections of his former prowess and glory contrasted with his present ruin and humiliation—all this recalls unmistakably the catastrophe of the *Trachiniae*. How exactly analogous, too, is the touch:—

The bright day is done,  
And we are for the dark,

and Hercules'

δωλ', δλωλα, φέγγος οὐκέτ' ἔστι μοι.

(I am sped, I am sped, light is no more for me.)

In the face of these parallels it is at least remarkable that Shakespeare has placed in the mouth of Antony a direct reference to the plot of the *Trachiniae*:—



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The shirt of Nessus is upon me. Teach me,  
Alcides, thou mine ancestor, thy rage;  
Let me lodge Lichas on the horns of the moon;

though he may, of course, have been recalling Ovid or Seneca.

In *Lear*, throughout, Shakespeare seems to be haunted with reminiscences of the *Orestes* and *Phoenissae*; how closely, for example, the scene where Cordelia is watching over the sleeping Lear recalls *Orestes*, 135-240, and both Lear and Gloucester with Edgar and Cordelia, the Oedipus and Antigone of the end of the *Phoenissae*.

In depicting Katherine and her position in *Henry VIII.*, it is difficult not to suppose that he had reminiscences of Hermione in the *Andromache*—her name, it will be remembered, he adopted in the *Winter's Tale*. Hermione, like Katherine, is an outraged wife, supplanted by a rival in her husband's affections, in a strange land without relatives or friends, her wrongs and her humiliation the more cruel from the proud consciousness that she has been a loyal wife, and is a great king's daughter. When Katherine speaks of herself as

Shipwreck'd upon a kingdom, where no pity,  
No friends, no home, no kindred weep for me,

she not only expresses herself as Euripides Hermione does, but, curiously enough, employs

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the same metaphor. Apostrophising her distant father at home, Hermione exclaims (853-4):—

*ἔλιπες, ἔλιπες, ὦ πάτερ, ἑπακτίαν  
μονάδ' ἔρημον οὔσαν ἐνάλου κώπας.*

(You left me, you left me, O father, a lonely woman—a boat stranded oarless on the shore.)

But the revengeful rage which possesses Euripides' heroine is very different from the dignified temperance of Katherine and the tender womanliness which she displays in the last scene of her life. Here she resembles Alcestis, and when we compare the Attendant's description of the last hours of Alcestis and the scene itself, we can hardly doubt that they were in Shakespeare's memory when he depicted the death of Katherine. The last thoughts of both are, in the one, for the helpless child, in the other, for the helpless children, whom they most regret to leave, and whom they both, with tenderest importunity, commend to the care of loving hands; both affectionately remember their faithful servants, Alcestis giving her farewell greeting to all, "there being none so mean who did not receive and return" that greeting; Katherine urging their claim to reward and grateful consideration; both die blessing the husbands who so little deserve their loyalty and love, and in both is the same touch of the true woman on another side, the wish to look distinguished and beautiful in death:—

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When I am dead, good wench,  
Let me be us'd with honour . . . . embalm me ;  
Then lay me forth, although unqueen'd, yet like  
A queen and daughter to a queen, inter me,

is Katherine's last request; to robe herself royally in her most splendid apparel is the last act of *Alcestis*. Both poets had no doubt the same teacher and the same model—Nature, but it is difficult to suppose that Shakespeare had no thought of the work of the Greek master. The scene in *Coriolanus* (v. 3), where Volumnia employs the child Marcius to work upon the feelings of his father :—

Speak, thou boy,  
Perhaps thy childishness will move him more  
Than can our reasons,

is a touch not in Plutarch, but may have been suggested by the pathetic scene in the *Iphigenia in Aulis* (1241-5), where the little Orestes is employed by Iphigenia for the same reason and for the same purpose. We have another striking parallel between Constance and Arthur in *King John* and Andromache and Astyanax in the *Troades*. Posthumus' speech about women in the fifth scene of the second act of *Cymbeline* is as exact a counterpart as any speech can well be of Hippolytus' indictment of them in Euripides, *Hippol.*, 616-668, including the sentiment :—

Is there no way for men to be, but women  
Must be half-workers ?

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There is nothing, indeed, in common between the plot of *Measure for Measure* and that of the *Antigone*, but we have much, and very much, which essentially recalls *Antigone* in *Isabella*, and *Creon* in *Angelo*. Each is the embodiment of one aspect of an ethical problem, the problem being the same in both dramas, and Shakespeare indicates it in the words of *Escalus*—"Which is the wiser here, Justice or Iniquity?" *Angelo*, like *Creon*, is the incarnation of rigid law, of the law of the letter, untempered by prudence and untempered by mercy and humanity. *Isabella*, like *Antigone*, is the embodiment of the unwritten law of the heart. Both laws are brought into collision, and the point of impact is a brother's fate. Nothing can be more characteristic of the differences between Greek drama and Shakespearean than the presentation and solution of the problem by the two poets, between the art-curbed passion and balanced economy in agent and incident peculiar to the first, and the fierce pulse of crowded life which throbs through the varied scenes of the other; between the form which *Nemesis* takes in the case of *Creon* and in the case of *Angelo*; between the triumph in defeat of *Antigone* and the triumph in forgiveness of *Isabella*.

The obvious analogy between the fate of *Agamemnon* and the elder *Hamlet*, and between the position of *Aegisthus* and *Claudius*, of

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Clytemnestra and Gertrude, of Orestes and the younger Hamlet, of Pylades and Horatio, points to nothing ; for, all that recalls the *Choephoroe*, the *Orestes* and the two *Electras* is implicit in the Hamlet legend. But a moment's reflection will show that the fact that Shakespeare nowhere in *Hamlet* recalls those dramas is no proof that he was unacquainted with them. He approached his subject from a totally different point of view, proceeding in his treatment of it on diametrically opposite lines, so that in his characters, in his incident, and in his ethical purpose he is never, in any particular, in touch with the Greek.

In *Romeo and Juliet* (v. 3) and in *Macbeth* (ii. 2) there is a remarkable parallel to a passage in the *Rhesus* of Euripides. Balthasar describes how, as he slept, he saw in a dream what was actually occurring at the time, the fatal duel between Paris and Romeo :—

As I did sleep under this yew-tree here,  
I dreamt my master and another fought,  
And that my master slew him.

And one of the grooms in *Macbeth* has the same vision in the same circumstances. In the *Rhesus* (779–803) the charioteer dreams that he saw two wolves springing murderously on the white steeds of Rhesus, at the very moment Diomedes and Ulysses are killing Rhesus, and seizing his steeds. The hint for this came from Homer, who gives however, an entirely different turn to the dream-

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warning (see *Iliad*, x. 405–97). It may be added that in 3 *Henry VI.*, iv. 2, there is a direct reference to this scene :—

As Ulysses and stout Diomede  
With sleight and manhood stole to Rhesus' tents,  
And brought from thence the Thracian fatal steeds.

This cannot, of course, be pressed, as the story was well known from other sources than its origin in Homer and the poets succeeding him. In the Eteocles of the *Phoenissae* we seem to have the archetype of Hotspur, certainly we have what might have served for the archetype, the same fiery soul, the same impetuous and reckless courage, the same irritable sense of “honour” and devouring ambition. And when we place in parallel with Hotspur's

By Heaven, methinks it were an easy leap  
To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon,  
Or dive into the bottom of the deep,  
Where fathom line could never touch the ground,  
And pluck up drowned honour by the locks,  
So he that doth redeem her hence, might wear  
Without corrival all her dignities,

Polynices' (*Phoen.*, 504–6)—

ἄστρον ἀν ἔλθοιμ' ἡλίου τ' ἐς ἀντολὰς  
καὶ γῆς ἔνερθε, δυνατὸς ὦν δρᾶσαι τὰδε  
τὴν θεῶν μεγίστην ὥστ' ἔχειν τυραννίδα

(I would mount to the risings of the stars and the sun, and (dive) beneath the earth could I do this—possess Heaven's greatest boon, sovereignty)

—the resemblance is the more striking.

Of the *Oedipus Coloneus* we seem to have other reminiscences besides the obvious parallels

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in *Lear* and *Cordelia*; the scene, for example, where in *Richard III.* his mother curses Richard (iv. 4), recalls with close exactness the scene (1382-96) in which Oedipus curses Polynices. Portia's appeal to mercy, *Merchant of Venice*, iv. 1, closely recalls Polynices' appeal to the same virtue :—

ἀλλ' ἔστι γὰρ καὶ Ζηνὶ σύνθακος θρόνων  
Αἰδῶς ἐπ' ἔργοις πᾶσι, καὶ πρὸς σοί, πάτερ,  
παρασταθήτω.

(But seeing that Zeus himself in all that he does has Mercy at his side for the sharer of his throne, let Mercy, I pray thee, be at thy side too, O father.)

In passing to Shakespeare's parallels in metaphysical speculation and generalised reflection on life, to use the term in its most comprehensive sense, we may first notice the possible influence exercised on him by Jocasta's magnificent *ῥήσις* in the *Phoenissae*, 582-5. We trace it in Ulysses' great speech in the second scene of the first act of *Troilus and Cressida*, which borrows its sentiments and even its imagery, and, catching its very cadence and rhythm, might have been modelled on it; in Henry V.'s noble soliloquy in the first scene of the fourth act of the play; and though we need not emphasize as significant the parallel between Wolsey's

Cromwell, I charge thee fling away ambition :  
By that sin fell the angels, etc.,

and Jocasta's

τί τῆς κακίστης δαιμόνων ἐφίεσαι  
φιλοτιμίας, παῖ; μὴ σύ γ' ἄδικος ἢ θεός·

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(Why art thou bent on ambition, the worst of deities? I pray thee forbear; a goddess she who knows no justice),

it is perhaps worth noticing. Nor would it be any exaggeration to say that every article in Shakespeare's political creed, a creed so elaborately preached and illustrated in his Historical Plays, is summed up in the first speech of Menelaus in the *Ajax* (1052-90) and Creon's speech to Haemon in the *Antigone* (665-80).

A sentiment peculiarly characteristic of the Greeks was their superstitious reverence for what was popularly accepted and become custom. This continually finds emphatic expression in the Greek dramas, and is indeed woven into the very fabric of their ethics. We need go no further than a line in Sophocles, as it is typical of innumerable other passages: *τό τοι νομισθὲν τῆς ἀληθείας κρατεῖ* (what custom establishes out-masters truth), *Frag.* 84, and Euripides' *Bacchae*, 894, where *τὸ ἐν χρόνῳ μακρῷ νόμιμον, δαιμόνιον*—what has long been custom is divine. This is exactly Shakespeare's philosophy. "What custom wills, in all things should we do it" (*Cor.* ii. 3). "Our virtues lie in the interpretation of the time" (*Id.*, iv. 7), but illustrations would be endless.

And in his general reflections on life and death we see how much he has in common, and very strikingly in common, with the Greek dramatists. Is it too much to say that Hamlet's famous soliloquy and the Duke's speech in



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*Measure for Measure* are little more than superbly embellished adaptations of the following lines of Euripides (Fragments of *Phoenix* quoted by Stobaeus, cxxi. 12):—

ὦ φιλόζῳοι βροτοί,  
οἱ τὴν ἐπιστελχουσαν ἡμέραν ἰδεῖν  
ποθεῖτ' ἔχοντες μυρίων ἄχθος κακῶν.  
οὕτως ἔρωσ βροτοῖσιν ἔγκειται βλου.  
τὸ ζῆν γὰρ ἴσμεν· τοῦ θανεῖν δ' ἀπειρία  
πᾶς τις φοβεῖται φῶς λιπεῖν τὸδ ἡλίου

(O life-loving mortals, who yearn to see the approaching day, burdened though ye be with countless ills, so urgent on all is the love of life; for life we know, of death we know nothing, and therefore it is that every one of us is afraid to quit this light of the sun)<sup>1</sup>;

and of the Chorus (1211–48) in the *Oedipus Coloneus*.

And as is life such is man. To the Greek dramatists, “breath and shadow only” (πνεῦμα καὶ σκιά μόνον), “an apparition” (εἶδωλον), “a thing of a day” (ἰσαμέριός τις), “a mere nothing” (ἴσος καὶ τὸ μηδέν),<sup>1</sup> “a creature like a dream” (εἰκελόνειρος); to Shakespeare, “such stuff as dreams are made of,” “a walking shadow,” “a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more,” “the quintessence of dust,” all that is implied in the reflections of Hamlet, of Jacques, of Prospero. But it is not so much in the reflections themselves as in their tone and colour, in the absence

<sup>1</sup> For the possible influence of Montaigne see the Essay on *Shakespeare and Montaigne*.

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of any flavour of cynicism, in the intense sincerity of "the sense of tears in human things" from which they so obviously spring, that we recognize Shakespeare's kinship with his Greek predecessors. I lay, of course, no stress on these parallels themselves; all that I wish to emphasize is, that the accentuation of what they express, as well as its note, differentiates the dramas of Shakespeare from those of his contemporaries, and allies them with the Greek.

Equally remarkable is the perfect correspondence between the attitude of Shakespeare and that of the Greek dramatists, though we must except Aeschylus, towards the great problems of death and man's future beyond it. Shakespeare had inherited Christian traditions, and the Christian religion he treats uniformly with the profoundest respect and reverence. The poet who stood next to himself among his contemporaries was, as the philosophy of the *Faerie Queene* shows, essentially Christian; the metaphysic of contemporary dramatists, where it expresses itself, is emphatically Christian; the greatest philosopher among his contemporaries was a Christian. And yet, if we put aside what merely pertains to dramatic machinery, such as the ghost in Hamlet and the death-bed vision of Katherine, and what may be regarded simply as dramatic utterances, as sentiments and reflections which coming from Christians are ap-

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propriate to Christians, and consider the real metaphysic of the dramas, in what respect does it differ from that of Sophocles and Euripides? It is in the speculations of Hamlet; in the philosophy of Jacques, of Duke Vincentio, of Prospero; in the exhortations of Isabella and Friar Laurence; in the dirge in Cymbeline; in the speeches put in the mouths of those who are at the point of death; in the reflections of the survivors on the fate of those who have fallen; in such an allegory as the *Tempest*, that we are to look for light on his metaphysical philosophy in its relation to death and what follows death. It is precisely that of Sophocles and Euripides. On a life beyond the grave it is absolutely silent, as piously silent on the side of negation, as it is honestly silent on the side of affirmation. Sophocles leaves the fate of Oedipus shrouded in mystery; Shakespeare makes Hamlet quit the world with "the rest is silence," as the last expression of earthly sentience.

Not less Greek is his profound respect for the conventional symbols in which religious conceptions embody themselves, but his practical resolution of formal theology into the moral law—in other words, in the fact that his theology resolves itself into little more than the Heraclean  $\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\acute{\omega}\pi\omega \delta\alpha\iota\mu\omega\nu$  (character is man's Divinity), and into what is expressed, according to the Scholiast, in Euripides' sentiment (*Hecuba*, 800-1):—

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νόμῳ γὰρ τοὺς θεοὺς ἡγούμεθα,  
καὶ ζῶμεν ἄδικα καὶ δίκαι' ὠρισμένοι.

that is, it is "because of the law and the fact that in our lives we distinguish between right and wrong that we believe in the existence of such Divine Powers as we do believe in." And if he is Greek in his metaphysic he is equally Greek in his ethic, though in important respects his ethic is tempered with Christian ideals. On nothing does he lay more stress than on the observance of the Mean and on the relation of virtue to the becoming. His dramas, like those of his Greek predecessors, and unlike those of his contemporaries, are, with scarcely any exception, essentially didactic, didactic alike in the lessons implied in their plots, and in the sentiments and reflections, proverbs and aphorisms, with which they have been so studiously and abundantly sown, and which make them storehouses of ethical and political wisdom.

And this brings me to the last point. The development of the author of the plays preceding the second edition of *Hamlet* into the author of the plays succeeding it—namely, the second *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Lear*, *Othello*, and the remaining plays of the third period on to *Cymbeline* and the *Tempest*—is at least difficult to explain as merely the natural result of maturer powers. If this was the case, we must assume that instinct led Shakespeare to the Greek conception

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of the scope and functions of tragedy, and that by a certain natural affinity he caught also the accent and tone as well as some of the most striking characteristics of Greek tragedy.<sup>1</sup> A few typical illustrations must suffice, and in considering them we must be careful to remember that they indicate the essential and peculiar characteristics of Shakespearean tragedy and tragi-comedy, in other words their differentiation from the drama of his contemporaries. Aristotle, deducing his canons from the Greek masterpieces, defines tragedy as "the representation of an action, serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude . . . through pity and fear effecting the purgation of these passions." That this end may be attained the protagonist must not be a perfectly bad man or a perfectly good man, for, to represent suffering and ruin befalling a perfectly good man defeats equally the

<sup>1</sup> It is surely not too much to say that *Macbeth*, metaphysically considered, simply *unfolds* what is latent in the following passage of the *Agamemnon*, 210-6:—

ἐπεὶ δ' ἀνάγκας ἔδου λέπαδνον  
φρονὸς πνέων δυσσεβῆ τροπαίαν  
ἀναγνον ἀνέρον, τόθεν  
τὸ παντότολμον φρονεῖν μετέγνω,—  
βροτοῖς θρασύνει γὰρ αἰσχρόμητις  
τάλαινα παρακοπὰ πρωτοπήμων.

(But when he had put on the yoke band of Necessity, blowing a changed gale of mind, impious, unblessed, unholy, from that moment he changed to all-daring recklessness, for in men a miserable frenzy, prompting deeds of shame and initiating mischief, emboldens.)

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end of tragedy, because it excites only disgust. The protagonist should, therefore, be one who stands morally between the two extremes, not eminently virtuous but not without virtue, the calamities befalling him being due, not to villany and baseness, but to some error of judgment, some flaw in character, some inherited taint or criminal legacy. Thus tragedy should have a moral aim, and that aim it should attain by the excitement and purification of the passions of pity and fear. With what scrupulous care Shakespeare has, with the exception of his immature works, notably *Richard III.*, observed these canons, will be evident to anyone who will consider the protagonists of his mature tragedies. In Hamlet the ἀμαρτία is the infirmity of the will, the result of allowing the emotional and the reflective nature to subjugate the moral; in Macbeth it is accurately indicated by his wife's character of him; in Lear it is intemperance, the vice of the Akolast; in Othello it is an error of judgment; in Coriolanus it is the insanity of arrogance; in Angelo moral ὑβρις; in Antony unbridled sensuality; in Timon self-indulgence and prodigality. In one important respect, indeed, Shakespeare's machinery differs from that of the Greek poets. In his, the ἀμαρτία for which the protagonist is responsible determines the course of the action; free will is postulated, and, as free agents, his protagonists stand or fall. In Greek machinery, the effect of actions for which the protagonist is

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not responsible, and which have antecedently involved him in calamity, is thrown into the scale of the *ἀμαρτία*. In one play, and in one play only, is this discernible in Shakespeare, and that is in *Macbeth*. Had Macbeth not been represented as partly under the thralldom of Destiny, his fate would no more have excited "pity and fear" than the fate of Richard III. How perfectly Shakespeare understood this canon is indicated by the remark in *Lear* :—

The judgment of the Heavens that makes us tremble  
Touches us not with pity ;

exactly Aristotle's τὸ γὰρ δεινὸν ἕτερον τοῦ ἐλεεινοῦ καὶ ἐκκρουστικόν—what excites terror is different from what excites pity, and indeed thrusts it out. Nor was this the only moral end which he might have learnt from his Greek predecessors to attain by tragedy. The parallel between the two dramas with which he almost certainly closed his career, *Cymbeline* and the *Tempest*, present a singularly close parallel in their ethical teaching and significance to the two dramas with which Sophocles took his leave of life, the *Philoctetes* and the *Oedipus Coloneus*. All have the same burden,—purification by suffering, symbolic revelation of the just and merciful wisdom of that inscrutable Power to whom man's most fitting tribute is submission and patience.

At first sight it might appear that there is nothing in common between the construction in

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totality and the construction in detail of Attic and Shakespearean tragedy. And indeed the differences are obvious. But if we set aside the melic element, the representation of the catastrophe in narrative, and the prominence given to Destiny as a factor in the action, we shall find that the differences lie mainly in the fact that what is presented in the one is presented in elaborate miniature, and that what is presented in the other is presented in broad, bold fresco; in other words, that simplicity and concentration are the notes of the one, comprehensiveness and discursiveness the notes of the other. Much has been made of the Unities. In reading the *Agamemnon* and *Eumenides*, the *Antigone*, the *Trachiniae*, the *Suppliants* of Euripides, and at least half a dozen other plays, Shakespeare would most certainly not have discerned the existence of the Unity of Time. In the *Eumenides* and in the *Ajax* he would have seen the Unity of Place equally disregarded. With regard to the Unity of Action it is no paradox to say that it is practically observed as faithfully in his tragedies as it is in those of Sophocles. Where it is apparently violated, as in his so-called double plots, this is simply to be attributed to the colossal scale on which the action is presented and developed. Occasionally, as in *Richard III.*, *Macbeth*, and the *Tempest*, where the plot is as simple and concentrated as that of a typical Greek drama, it is exactly observed.



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Nor would he have found himself without precedent for relieving the tenseness and solemnity of tragedy by the introduction of comedy and homely realism. Nothing could be more simply realistic than the *Electra* of Euripides, nothing more comical than the character and position of Menelaus in the *Helena*. In the Phrygian Eunuch in the *Orestes* we have almost as great a foil to the surrounding horrors as the Porter in *Macbeth*. In the Watchman in the *Antigone* he might have found the prototype of one of his own Clowns; the Nurse in the *Choephoroe* is the exact counterpart in outline of the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the Nurse in the *Hippolytus* might have stood for the portrait of Emilia in *Othello*; the behaviour of Hercules in the palace of Admetus is worthy of Sir Toby Belch. The cowardice of Ulysses in the first scene of the *Ajax* reminds us of Falstaff. In the terrific scene in the *Agamemnon*, where Cassandra is describing in clairvoyance the murder of the king, the ludicrous comments of the Chorus on her inspired ravings produce, and are no doubt designed to produce, the same impression as the babbling comments of the Fool on the ravings of Lear. They at once heighten by contrast the tragic effect and relieve the intensity of the strain on our emotions. On this, however, the introduction of comedy, no stress need be laid, as it was already an essential part of Romantic tragedy. What that tragedy had

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not taught him, and what Greek tragedy would teach him, was the artistic use of it.

In two of its most striking and predominating characteristics Shakespeare's dramatic art recalls characteristics equally striking and predominating in the dramatic art of Sophocles and of no other preceding master; one is, the elaborately antithetical disposition of the *dramatis personae*, the other is the not less elaborately studied employment of irony. Contrasts in character are naturally introduced and must, indeed, almost necessarily occur in every drama, but the nicely studied arrangement of them in series of antitheses is, among Shakespeare's predecessors, peculiar to Sophocles alone. By him, and by him only, it was made an essential component in the structure of drama. This characteristic could not but have struck Shakespeare had he read even one of the Sophoclean tragedies. How essentially it enters into his own dramatic method is too obvious to need illustration.

A comparison between the irony of Shakespeare and of Sophocles would require a lengthy dissertation. It must here suffice to say, that Shakespeare stands absolutely alone among his modern predecessors and contemporaries in his elaborate and systematic use of it, whether it reveal itself in such flashes as Lady Capulet's terrible "I would the fool were married to her grave"; Edmund's "Yours in the ranks of death"; Othello's awful "Iago, honest and just, . . . thou

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teachest me"; poor Imogen's "I hope it be not gone to tell my lord That I kiss aught but he": or in circumstance, as in the peaceful and attractive aspect of Macbeth's Castle to Banquo and Duncan; in the witch-pageants and promises in the same play; in Posthumus' savage attack on Imogen; and in the shipwreck of Prospero's enemies; or, lastly, in its suffusion of whole plots, notably those of *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Cymbeline*, and the *Tempest*. In Sophocles, and in Sophocles alone, the employment of irony in all these phases is equally elaborate and equally pervasive. It is surely legitimate deduction to infer, that, if this differentiating characteristic of Shakespearean drama is not to be attributed to instinct, it must be attributed to the influence of Sophocles.

And now, on a general survey of what has been adduced in support of Shakespeare's indebtedness to the ancient classics, what are we justified in concluding? Obviously nothing more than can be inferred from circumstantial evidence. It is, of course, quite within the bounds of possibility that every parallel cited is either mere coincidence, or derived from what had been picked up in his English reading or in conversation; that what may be attributed to the direct influence of classical predecessors may be attributed to instinct and independent observation and reflection; that what he has in common with Sophocles or with any other

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ancient classic is due partly to accident, and partly to the necessary correspondence between all that is founded on nature and truth. It is not, however, with possibilities but with probabilities that investigations of this kind are concerned. What has been demonstrated is, that Shakespeare could read Latin, that in the Latin original he most certainly read Plautus, Ovid, and Seneca; that the Greek dramatists, and all those Greek authors, beside Plutarch, who appear to have influenced him, were easily accessible to him, as well in their entire works as in their fragments, in Latin translations. What has been assumed as probable, and probable in the highest degree of probability, is that he had the curiosity to turn to those translations which could scarcely fail to arrest his attention; that what, therefore, may have been borrowed from them was sometimes, perhaps often, actually borrowed from them, and that the characteristics, which differentiate his work from the work of his contemporaries and recall in essentials the work of the Greek dramatists, are actually attributable to the influence of those dramatists.

I need scarcely say, that it is, in itself, a matter of little moment whether Shakespeare owed much or owed nothing to the classics of Greece and Rome. And yet such an inquiry is surely not without interest, or even without importance. It shows how little the essential

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facts of life and nature are affected by the accidents of time and place; how little has been added to metaphysical and ethical truths since the Greek masters illustrated both. It reveals the kinship between men of genius, separated by more than two thousand years, and working under conditions which have nothing in common, as well as the kinship between ancient and modern art. It illustrates what Sainte-Beuve calls the Literary Tradition; for, even assuming that it does not prove what it was designed to prove—the direct and conscious indebtedness of the greatest of poets to his classical predecessors, it at least places beyond doubt that the drama of which he became the consummate master was, however modified, an inheritance, not an independent creation, that without the artists of the *Agamemnon*, the *Oedipus Rex* and the *Medea*, we should never have had the artist of *Hamlet*, of *Macbeth* and of *Lear*. It demonstrates that the works which are the pride and glory of the modern world are not only indissolubly linked with the ancient masterpieces, but find in those masterpieces their true companions and their best commentaries.

## II

### SHAKESPEAREAN PARADOXES

SAINTE-BEUVE has finely said that the first aim of criticism should be the discovery of truth, not, as Goethe contended, the interpretation of the good and the beautiful. "If I had," he wrote to M. Duruy, "a device, it would be *The True, The True Only*, I would leave the beautiful and the good to settle matters afterwards as best they could." But the discovery of truth is about the last thing with which criticism in our day appears to concern itself. There seems to be the same impression among critics as there is among novelists, that it is disgraceful to be seen on the highways. Into what by-paths fiction has wandered, and into what malodorous abysses and squalid deserts those by-paths have led and are leading it is sufficiently notorious. But the seduction of criticism is much more to be lamented. Popular fiction moves in a sphere of its own. It has its own public and its own fortunes; with serious literature it has no influential connexion. It is

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otherwise with criticism. On its competence and sincerity depends more than can be defined or estimated, for it gives the ply to the serious study of literature generally. Whether that study is to be facilitated or retarded, to go straight or to take wrong turns, to be fruitful or barren—for all this it is responsible. It would not be too much to say that never in the history of letters has criticism been so unscrupulously indifferent to its true functions as it is at the present time. It seems to assume that to tell the truth is to thresh the straw; that anything which is new is better than anything which is true; that the more incontestably established the fact the more obviously sound the accepted view, the greater the necessity for the substitution of sophistry and paradox.

There is no corner of literature in which this spirit is not at work; theology, philosophy and *belles lettres* are alike affected by its ubiquitously mischievous activity. Of the havoc which has, during the last thirty years, been made of some of the works of our national classics, the *Minor Poems of Chaucer*, for example, *The Testament of Love*, *The Travels of Maundeville*, or *More's History of Richard III.*, no one could complain; it has been the result of a legitimate application of advancing philological knowledge and of improved critical methods. But, unhappily, these triumphs of legitimate criticism have given a great impulse to the paradoxical in-

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genuity and sophistry on which illegitimate criticism relies. What was justifiable has become the signal for what was not. To question the authenticity of works which every one has accepted as genuine was, it was soon discovered, a short and sure path to notoriety; to demonstrate their spuriousness at whatever cost to candour, to probability, to common sense, a certain path to distinction.

In the dramas of Shakespeare this school of critics finds not merely the most obvious but the most appropriate subjects for the exercise of its perverse ingenuity. Of the history of more than one half of them our knowledge begins and ends with their appearance in the First Folio, published nearly eight years after the poet's death; of the history of the rest we know no more than can be gathered from their appearance in quarto during his lifetime, from entries in the Stationers' Registers, and from scanty and brief notices in the writings of his contemporaries. In no poet are there so many different characteristics of style, of colour, of sentiment, of thought discernible; and in no poet, with the exception, perhaps, of Byron, are there such striking inequalities. The consequence has been that speculative criticism has absolutely revelled in the dissolution of these dramas. In some, we are informed, there is no trace of his hand at all, and they must go in their entirety; from many, whole scenes, from



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others whole acts have been torn. Things, indeed, have come to such a pass that we never know where we are—whether we are reading Shakespeare or the work of the “other hand” or “hands,” and in a few years if destruction advances at this pace, Shakespeare will become almost as mythical as Homer.

It is surely high time to put in a plea for the arrest of this craze, and the impugment of the authenticity of *Titus Andronicus* may be appropriately selected for three reasons: first, because it comprehensively illustrates the methods employed by these iconoclasts for the attainment of their paradoxical purposes, their indifference to evidence, to probability, to reason; secondly, because it illustrates how easily and lightly a baseless theory passes by dint of mere repetition into an article of belief; and thirdly, because the assumption of the spuriousness of this play affects very materially the important question of Shakespeare's early education and the development of his genius.

It may be well to begin with a brief sketch of the plot, for *Titus* is not one of those plays which are likely to be fresh in the memory even of Shakespeare's most devoted admirers, nor, except for critical purposes, would any one desire to dwell on it.

In form an historical drama, it has no foundation in fact, epoch, incidents and characters being alike fictitious. And the plot is this.

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Titus Andronicus, a noble Roman general, having just returned for the fifth time triumphant over the Goths, is, on his arrival in Rome, elected Emperor. But, worn out with age and service, he resigns the honour to another claimant, Saturninus, the eldest son of the late Emperor, at the same time offering him his daughter Lavinia in marriage. Lavinia, however, had been betrothed to Bassianus, a younger brother of Saturninus, and Bassianus declines to resign her. Accordingly he seizes Lavinia and carries her off, being supported by Titus' sons. Titus attempts to rescue her, and finding himself opposed, sword in hand, by his youngest son Mutius, stabs and kills the boy. All this, however, though introductory, is episodic. The hinge on which the plot turns is the wrong done to one of the captives whom Titus had brought home to grace his triumph. Among these captives were Tamora, Queen of the Goths, her three sons Alabarbus, Cheiron and Demetrius, and Tamora's paramour, a brutal Moor named Aaron. At the suggestion of Lucius, one of Titus' sons, Alabarbus is sacrificed, in spite of the pitiable entreaties of his mother, to the *Manes* of the Andronici, who had been slain in the late war.

From this moment Tamora dedicates herself to vengeance, to the extirpation of the accursed family who had butchered her child and she has ample opportunity. Assigned to

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the new Emperor as his concubine, she so fascinates him by her beauty that he makes her his queen. But Aaron has her heart, and, with Aaron and her two sons as assistants, she prepares to carry out her terrible purpose. A hunting expedition is arranged by Titus, and this gives Tamora and Aaron an opportunity for a secret meeting. They are discovered in the recesses of a lonely forest by Bassianus and Lavinia, who, with many stinging taunts, threaten to inform the Emperor of what they had witnessed. This precipitates the plot. Aaron had already laid a trap for Quintus and Martius, the two sons of Titus, by luring them to a deep pit, into which he had contrived that they should fall. Cheiron and Demetrius, at Tamora's instigation, then murder Bassianus and fling his body into the pit, in which Titus' two sons are struggling still alive. They then, both of them, violate Lavinia, tearing out her tongue and cutting off her two arms that she may not divulge, either by speech or writing, what she knows. The two sons of Titus are accused of the murder of their brother-in-law, and conveyed under guard to Rome, to answer the charge before the Tribunes. Aaron then informs Titus that the Emperor will spare the lives of his sons, if he will have his hand cut off and sent to him. Titus joyfully consents, and Aaron hews off the old man's hand, which is shortly afterwards brought mockingly back to him by a messenger,

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together with the heads of his murdered sons. Meanwhile Lavinia, speechless and without the means of communicating what she knows, the innocence of her brothers and the atrocities of Tamora and Aaron, at last contrives, by means of a staff in her mouth guided by the stumps of her arms, to trace on some sandy ground the words, "*Stuprum, Cheiron, Demetrius.*"

In the midst of these horrors Tamora gives birth to a child, whose coal-black hue is a sufficient indication of its adulterous parentage. Aaron endeavours to hoodwink the Emperor by getting a white child substituted for the black, and to prepare the way murders the nurse, that her lips may be closed. Not long afterwards he is surprised and taken prisoner by Lucius, who had already left Rome to raise the Goths. To save the life of the child, the only human touch in this incarnate fiend, he confesses everything to Lucius. Meanwhile in Rome horrors are accumulating on horrors. Titus has become insane, and is visited by Tamora and her two sons, who, playing on his madness, inform him that they are Revenge, Rape, and Murder, and devoted to his service. They request him to invite Lucius, who has just entered Rome with an invading army, to a banquet, their intention being to save themselves and their confederates from impending destruction by assassinating him. To this Titus, who sees his opportunity, consents. The guests are invited, Lucius and a

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powerful bodyguard are in attendance, and Titus gloats gleefully over the thought of approaching vengeance. Tamora's two sons arriving, they are seized and bound with ropes. Lavinia contrives to hold a basin, while Titus, with a knife in his remaining hand, cuts their throats, and into the basin streams their cursed blood. Then, in horrible imitation of the feast of Atreus, he bakes their flesh in a pye, of which shortly afterwards he asks Tamora to partake, and informing her of what she had eaten, stabs her, having just before in pity killed Lavinia as Virginius in pity killed Virginia. Saturninus then murders Titus, and is himself instantly struck down by Lucius. Tamora's body is to be thrown forth to beasts of prey, and Aaron is condemned to stand, breast deep in earth, and perish slowly by starvation.

Of this ghastly and revolting drama Mr. Gerald Massey may well say: "It is a perfect slaughter-house, and the blood appeals to all the senses. It reeks blood; it smells of blood; we almost feel that we have handled blood, it is so gross. It is tragedy only in the coarsest relationship, the tragedy of horror." We would, indeed, gladly believe that it is not from Shakespeare's hand, but criticism is not concerned with sentiment, it is concerned with truth, and with truth alone. If Shakespeare was the author we gain nothing by maintaining the contrary, but we lose much. Had this play not come down to us

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we should never have known the first stage in the development of the genius which was in its maturity to produce *Othello* and *Lear*, never have realized what a very few years could effect in the temper and constitution of a dramatist and poet. We should, moreover, have been without an important connecting link between the poems and the dramas, between *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Richard III.*, and without a very striking illustration of the timid servility with which Shakespeare at the beginning of his career, and against his better judgment, followed popular models.

It may be said without reserve that, if Shakespeare was not the author of *Titus Andronicus*, there is an end to circumstantial testimony in literary questions; for the evidence external and internal is as conclusive as such evidence can possibly be. It was included by Meres in the list which he gave of Shakespeare's plays in 1598, a list the correctness of which has not been questioned in the case of any other drama mentioned in it. It was included by Heminge and Condell in the First Folio of 1623, and printed from a revised copy. None of Shakespeare's contemporaries and successors, so far as is known, ever doubted its authenticity. We know from Henslowe's Diary and from frequent allusions to it, notably by the author of *Father Hubbard's Tales*, by the author of a *Knack to know a Knave*, and above all by Ben Jonson,

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that it was one of the most popular plays on the Elizabethan stage.

Neither Meres nor Heminge and Condell would, therefore, have been likely to assign it to Shakespeare had it not been his, and had they done so without warrant some protest would almost certainly have been raised. His name, it is true, was not on the title-pages of either of the quartos published during his lifetime, but his name was not on the title-pages of the first quartos of *Richard II.*, of the quartos of the *First Part of Henry IV.*, or of *Henry VI.*, or of either of the first three quartos of *Romeo and Juliet*. It was, moreover, acted, as we know from Henslowe's Diary, by Shakespeare's own company. But in 1686, more than half a century after Shakespeare's death, a miserable scribbler, as Sir Walter Scott justly calls him, who is now remembered only by Dryden's sarcasms, of the name of Edward Ravenscroft, produced a contemptible adaptation of the drama, and in the following year published it with an address to the reader. In this address he says:—

There is a play in Mr. Shakespeare's volume under the name of *Titus Andronicus*, from whence I drew part of this. I have been told by some anciently conversant with the stage that it was not originally his, but brought him by a private author to be acted, and he only gave some master-touches to one or two of the principal parts and characters. This I am apt to believe, because 'tis the most incorrect and indigestible piece of all his works. It seems rather a heap of rubbish than a structure.

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How little Ravenscroft is to be trusted in what he says may be judged from this. Some ten years before, "about the time of the Popish Plot," he had also altered and revived the play, introducing it by a prologue in which he ascribed it wholly to Shakespeare, without a word about the private author or about it being only partly from Shakespeare's pen. This prologue he now suppressed, and both Shadwell and Langbaine publicly taunted him with having got up the story told in the above address for the purpose of exalting the merit of his own alterations and additions. And, as he was a man of the loosest character and made no reply to the charge, this seems very likely. Theobald rejected it on internal evidence, and because he thought, but very erroneously, that Ben Jonson's statement about the time of its first appearance—a statement to which I shall presently refer—could not be reconciled with the chronology of Shakespeare's life. Dr. Johnson followed Theobald, and Malone and Steevens followed Johnson. Hypothesis gradually hardened into fact, so that in 1837 we find Hallam writing "*Titus Andronicus* is now by common consent denied to be in any sense a production of Shakespeare."

The first point to be settled is the period of its composition, for, if it be from Shakespeare's hand, it must have been one of his very earliest dramas, probably his first experiment in tragedy. If it could be shown that the play could not have



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been produced, say, before 1593, however overwhelming may be the other evidence of its Shakespearean authorship, the whole case must fall to the ground.

The earliest reference to it is in Henslowe's Diary, January 23, 1593, and after that its entry on the Stationers' Registers on the 6th of the following February. It was first printed, according to Langbaine—for this edition, though seen by Langbaine, has since disappeared—in 1594; the only quartos now extant are dated respectively 1600 and 1611. But we know from Ben Jonson that it had been on the stage some two or three years before this. For, in the Introduction to *Bartholomew Fair*, first produced in 1614, occurs the following passage: "He that will swear *Jeronimo* or *Andronicus* are the best plays yet shall pass unexcepted at here as a man whose judgment shows it is constant and hath stood still these five-and-twenty or thirty years." Now Ben Jonson was not in the habit of writing at random, and if we take his first reckoning, that would give 1589 as the year of the vogue of *Titus*; if we strike the medium, as it seems natural to do, this would give us 1586 or 1587. We know from Henslowe's Diary that the play with which it is coupled, *Jeronimo*, was in the full tide of its popularity in 1591, and how long before this we have no means of ascertaining. The very latest of these dates carries us back to

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a time preceding the appearance of any of Shakespeare's printed productions. We are, therefore, justified in concluding that the composition of *Titus* must be assigned to a period ranging between 1586 and 1591, and that it was thus, beyond all reasonable doubt, his very earliest, or one of his very earliest attempts at drama.

But, it may be objected, he speaks of *Venus and Adonis* as the first heir of his invention, and *Venus and Adonis* was published in 1593. The reply to this is, either that *Venus and Adonis* was written long before it was printed—I do not wish to indulge in conjecture, but it seems to me highly probable that it was composed at Stratford before he came up to London, as early perhaps as 1585—or that for some reason he did not regard his early dramas as heirs of his invention. What is certain is, as we know from Greene and Chettle, that he was writing plays before 1593.

But to pass from external to internal evidence. The play abounds with turns of expression, with phrases, with imagery, with sentiments which are found in the poems and in the dramas produced subsequently. Here we have an adumbration of some position, incident or character afterwards filled out and developed; here the anticipation, more or less crude, of some touch of humour or pathos recurring more maturely in later work. Nor is this all. The play must have been produced during or about the time

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he was engaged on *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, and what, therefore, we should expect to find would be characteristics in common and strikingly in common with these poems, the same or similar imagery in metaphor and illustration, parallel mythological and classical allusions, the saturation of Ovidian influence, and a large infusion of legal phraseology. And we find them in abundance. Let us begin with miscellaneous parallels, taken in the order of the scenes and acts.

Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?  
Draw near them then in being merciful.  
(i. 2.)

The quality of mercy is not strain'd  
It is an attribute of God Himself,  
And earthly power doth then show likest God's,  
When mercy seasons justice.  
(*Merch. of Ven.*, iv. 1.)

The sacrificing fire  
Whose smoke, like incense, doth perfume the sky.  
(i. 2.)

Laud we the gods ;  
And let our crooked smokes climb to their nostrils.  
(*Cymb.*, v. 5.)

Repose you here,  
Secure from worldly chances and mishaps ;  
Here lurks no treason, here no envy swells,  
Here grow no damned grudges, here no storms,  
No noise, but silence and eternal sleep.  
(i. 2.)

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Echoed in the Dirge in *Cymbeline* and in *Macbeth* on Duncan, *Macb.*, iii. 2—

She is a woman, therefore to be woo'd;  
She is a woman, therefore to be won;  
(ii. 1)

repeated 1 *Henry VI.*, v. 3—

She's beautiful, and therefore to be woo'd;  
She is a woman, therefore to be won;

and echoed in turn and rhythm in *Richard III.*,  
i. 3—

Was ever woman in this humour woo'd,  
Was ever woman in this humour won?

The morn is bright and grey.  
(1. i. 2.)

This is Shakespeare's favourite and constantly repeated epithet for the morning and the morning sky, occurring in Sonnet cxxxii. in *Romeo and Juliet*, ii. 3, in *Henry IV.*, i. 3 :—

And run like swallows o'er the plain.

The swiftness of swallows is again referred to in the play, *infra*, iv. 2, and in *Richard III.* v. 2—

True love is swift and flies with swallows' wings,  
And wash their hands in Bassianus' blood.  
(ii. 3.)

Would I  
Wash my fierce hand in his heart.  
(*Coriolanus*, i. 10.)

Detested, dark blood-drinking pit.  
(ii. 4.)

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The same epithet occurs twice in 1 *Henry VI.*, ii. 4, and *Id.*, Part II. iii. 2. I do not scruple, let me add, to quote *Henry VI.* as Shakespeare's, for there is almost as little reason for questioning the authenticity of the three parts as well as that of the two plays of which Parts ii. and iii. are recasts as there is of questioning the authorship of *Titus*. I say "almost," because qualification is necessary, as *Henry VI.* is not included in Meres' list :—

Upon whose leaves are drops of new-shed blood  
As fresh as morning's dew distill'd on flowers.  
(ii. 4.)

Whose blood upon the fresh flowers being shed.  
(*Venus and Adonis*, 665.)

O had the monster seen these lily hands  
Tremble like aspen leaves upon a lute,  
And made the silken strings delight to kiss them.

Not only exquisitely Shakespearean but recalling Sonnet cxxviii.—

How oft when thou, my musick, musick playest  
Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds  
With thy sweet fingers . . . . .  
Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap  
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand.

O that delightful *engine of her thoughts*.  
(iii. 2.)

Once more the *engine of her thoughts* began.  
(*Venus and Adonis*, 367.)

Marcus *unknit that sorrow-wreathen knot*.  
(iii. 2.)

Sitting  
*His arms in this sad knot*.  
(*Tempest*, i. 2.)

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My heart, all mad with misery,  
Beats in this hollow prison of my flesh,  
Then thus I thump it down.

(*Ibid.*, ii.)

*Lear.* O me, my heart, my rising heart—but down.

*Fool.* Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels  
when she put them in the paste alive : she  
knapp'd 'em o' the coxcombs with a stick and  
cried "Down."

(*Lear*, ii. 4.)

Thou *kill'st my heart.*

(*Ibid.*, iii.)

The king hath *kill'd his heart.*

(*Henry V.*, ii. 1.)

And the same expression occurs in *Venus and Adonis*, 502.

That they have murder'd this poor heart of mine.

Lavinia, go with me :

I'll to thy closet ; and go read with thee  
Sad stories chanced in the times of old.

(*Titus*, iii. 2.)

Let us sit upon the ground

And tell sad stories of the death of kings,  
How some have been deposed, some slain in war,  
Some, etc.

(*Richard II.*, iii. 2.)

*Dem.* Villain, what hast thou done ?

*Aar.* Done ! That which thou  
Canst not undo, etc.

(*Ibid.*, iv. 2.)

The whole turn of this passage with the play on the word—commentary is impossible—is exactly repeated in *Richard III.*, i. 1, in the conversation between Gloucester and Brackenbury.

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Two may keep counsel when the third's away.  
(iv. 2.)

Two may keep counsel putting one away.  
(*Romeo and Juliet*, ii. 4.)

Come on, you *thick-lipp'd* slave.  
(iv. 2.)

So of Othello :

What a full fortune does the *thick-lips* owe.  
(*Oth.*, i. 1.)

A long-tongu'd *babbling gossip*.  
(iv. 2.)

Make the *babbling gossip* of the air  
Cry out Olivia.  
(*Twelfth Night*, i. 5.)

*Tit.* Why, didst thou not come from heaven ?

*Clown.* From heaven ? Alas ! sir, I never came there.  
God forbid I should be so bold as to press to  
heaven in my young days.  
(iv. 3.)

Precisely the humour of Mrs. Quickly's remark about poor Falstaff :—

“So 'a cried out God, God, God, three or four times ; now I, to comfort him, bid him 'a should not think of God, I hop'd there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet.”

And how essentially Shakespearean, it may be noted in passing, is the same Clown's reply to Titus when Titus asks him, “What says Jupiter ?” “Alas, sir, I know not Jupiter ; I never drank with him in all my life.”

Is the sun dimm'd that *gnats do fly at it* ?  
(iv. 4.)

And whither *fly the gnats but at the sun* ?  
(3 *Henry VI.*, ii. 6.)

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And where, in the same passage, the indifference of the eagle to the chirping of little birds, because it knows that "with the shadow of his wing he can stint their melody," is described, we are reminded of *The Rape of Lucrece*, 506-7:—

A falcon towering in the skies  
Coucheth the fowl below with his wing's shade.

Loving kiss for kiss

O were the sum of these that I should pay  
Countless and infinite, yet would I pay them.

(v. 3.)

Repeated and condensed in *Venus and Adonis*, stanza 84.

In the passage where Titus is playing with his fancies, after the mutilation of Lavinia in the first part of the third Act:—

I am the sea ; hark how her sighs do blow ;  
She is the weeping welkin, I the earth ;  
Then must my sea be moved with her sighs,  
Then must my earth with her continual tears  
Become a deluge, overflow'd and drown'd—

how exactly have we the note of Richard II.'s soliloquy in Pomfret Castle (v. 5), just as the conceits of Titus to Lucius in the first scene of the third Act recall the conceits in the Arthur and Hubert scene in *King John*. In Titus we have as undoubtedly an adumbration of Lear. His mingled nobleness, weakness, tenderness and ferocity, his rash impetuosity in killing his son, his harsh and cruel obstinacy in refusing him burial, his



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impotent rage against Saturninus and the tribunes, his passionate appeals to "whatever power pities wretched tears," the gradual hardening of his heart-wringing agonies into monomania, the delineation of that monomania—see the masterly touches in the scene where Marcus kills the fly, and the scene of the arrow-shooting—all point indisputably to the future creator of Lear. Could any one doubt the touch of Shakespeare's hand in such a passage as this:—

I am not mad ; I know thee well enough ;  
Witness this wretched stump, these crimson lines ;  
Witness these trenches made by grief and care ;  
Witness the tiring day and heavy night ;  
Witness all sorrow, that I know thee well.

(v. 2.)

In Aaron we have a crude and exaggerated sketch of the type of character which developed into Richard III. and matured into Iago and Edmund. In Cheiron, that coarse and horrible incarnation of lust and hatred, we have the exact prototype of Cloten, just as Tamora is, in many respects, the prototype of Margaret in *Henry VI.*

Other notes in common between this drama and the poems and early plays are the illustrations from Nature and country life. Thus we have the description of the hunting scene and of the early morning, the allusion to the "doe struck and borne cleanly by the keeper's nose" (ii. 1) the

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“honey stacks so dangerous to sheep” (iv. 4), “the flight of fowl scatter’d by winds and high tempestuous gusts” (v. 3), “the stinging bees, in hottest summer day, led by their master to the flower’d fields” (v. 1), the “quivering green leaves” making “a chequer’d shadow on the ground” (ii. 3), the “flowers hanging their heads with frost” (iv. 4); while in the picture of—

The meadows yet not dry,  
With miry slime left on them by a flood  
(iii. 1)

is described what must have been very familiar to a resident at Stratford-on-Avon.

To pass, however, to what is more important, the influence of Ovid. No student of Shakespeare needs reminding that all his early, and even his later works are full of reminiscences of Ovid. From Ovid he derived *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, many passages of which are simply paraphrases of his original. It would not, indeed, be too much to say that in his familiarity with Ovid, and in the extent of his indebtedness to Ovid, he stands alone among Elizabethan poets. What do we find in *Titus*? The *Metamorphoses* is the work which Lavinia is represented as reading, the story of Philomela being the analogy of her own case; the account of her rape and mutilation being plainly derived from Ovid’s horrible narrative,<sup>1</sup> the line:

<sup>1</sup> *Metamorphoses*, vi. 549-58.

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“Forc’d in the ruthless, vast and gloomy woods,” is quite unmistakably an echo of Ovid’s line : “In stabula alta trahit silvis obscura vetustis”;<sup>1</sup> it is once quoted in the original,<sup>2</sup> and it is referred to, if we include the repetitions of the Procne and Tereus story, no less than fourteen times. Among these we have references to the story of Hecuba, to the story of Actaeon, to the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, to the Debate between Ajax and Ulysses, to the Centaurs’ Feast, to the aphorism of Solon. The name Cheiron may have been suggested by *Met.*, vi. 126, and no doubt any one fresh from a careful perusal of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti* would be able to add many minuter parallels in phraseology, imagery and sentiment. To Tarquin and the Rape of Lucrece there are three direct references—one in iii. 1, and two in iv. 1; and in the poem, as in the drama, there is the same insistence on the same horrid themes—lust, cruelty, and blood. The picture of the self-slain Lucrece, the “two slow rivers bubbling from her breast,” the “black blood congealed” with the red blood near it “blushing at that which is so putrefied,” and the disgusting detail added just before to give point to the conceit about weeping, is quite as revolting as the pic-

<sup>1</sup> *Met.*, vi. 521.

<sup>2</sup> Terras Astraea reliquit, iv. 3, 4, from *Metamorphoses*, i. 150.

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ture of the mutilated Lavinia. Nor are the mythological and classical allusions common to *Titus* and to the Poems less remarkable. Thus in the Poems and in *Titus* there are references to Hecuba going mad with sorrow, to the miseries of the aged Priam, to the debate between Ajax and Ulysses, to Diana and her nymphs, to Orpheus charming the nether Powers, to Sinon's betrayal of Troy, while, in both, the story of Tereus and Philomela is dwelt upon with curious pertinacity.

And, lastly, we have in the diction one of Shakespeare's most striking characteristics. All through his writings, but more particularly in the poems and earlier dramas, his fondness for legal phraseology and his profuse employment of it is so marked that its absence would be almost conclusive against the authenticity of a work attributed to him. But *Titus Andronicus* will sustain this test. Thus we have: "*affy* in thy uprightness" (i. 1), "true nobility *warrants* these words" (i. 2), "*Suum cuique* is our Roman justice" (i. 2), "the Prince in justice *seizeth* but his own" (i. 2), "rob my sweet sons of their *fee*" (ii. 3), "*purchase* us thy lasting friends" (ii. 4), "let me be their bail" (ii. 4), "the end upon them should be *executed*" (ii. 4), "do execution on my flesh and blood" (iv. 2), "do shameful *execution on* herself" (v. 3), "and make a *mutual closure* of our house" (v. 3), "the *extent* of legal justice" (iv. 4), "a *precedent* and

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lively *warrant*" (v. 3), "will *doom* her death" (iv. 2). Nor must we forget the masterly touch in the fifth Act, which is peculiarly characteristic of Shakespeare—the fine irony which identifies Tamora and her two sons with revenge, rape and murder just before retribution falls on them.

Such, then, is the evidence external and internal in favour of the Shakespearean authorship of this play. I have already observed that it is not a work of which the poet himself had reason, or of which his modern admirers have reason, to be proud. But it is not difficult to understand how he came to write it.

It belongs to a species of drama which was as popular in the Elizabethan age as it is intolerable now—the tragedy of horror. The father of this atrocity in art was Seneca; he gave it its models in theme and incidents, its models in form, diction and style. From Seneca it descended, a ghastly inheritance, to the Italian dramatists of the Renaissance. Whoever will turn to the *Orbecche* of Gherardi Cinthio, with its appalling and revolting butchery, to the *Acripanda* of Decio da Horte, which is still more atrocious in its carnage and mutilations, and to others which he will find in the *Teatro Italiano*, he will have no difficulty in understanding its transition from Seneca to the modern stage. It arrived in England about 1560, where, undergoing various modifications, but clinging faith-

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fully to vengeance and bloodshed, with or without the refinement of mutilation, it found successive expression in *Gorboduc*, *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Selimus*, *Soliman and Perseda*, *The Battle of Alcazar*, *The Rich Jew of Malta*, and what the Germans call the *Ur-Hamlet*. These were the plays in possession of the stage when Shakespeare began his career, and to these must be added a drama which cannot strictly be classed in this group, though having many of the characteristics of the group—namely, Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. Pre-eminent in popularity were *Tamburlaine* and *The Spanish Tragedy*, and perhaps after them Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*. The public taste taking the ply from these dramas was all for highly spiced tragedy. The more murders and suicides, massacres and mutilations a play contained, the more ghastly and horrible its details, the more certain was it to find favour. Thus we have the author of the First Part of *Selimus*, which is almost as horrible as *Titus*, taking leave of his audience with the words :

If this first part, gentles, do like you well,  
The second part shall greater murders tell.

Now, two things stand out quite clearly about Shakespeare ; he was eminently a man of business, and he followed at first, with timid servility, the fashion. Of his two long poems *Venus and Adonis* is plainly modelled on Lodge's *Scilla's*

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*Metamorphosis*, of which, so far as form is concerned, it is an echo, while the *Rape of Lucrece* is as obviously modelled on Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond*; so far as form and style go, his Sonnets are indistinguishable from the sonnets then most in vogue, notably those of Barnes and Lodge. In his early romantic comedies he took Greene and Lyly as his models: his early histories are cast so completely in the mould of Marlowe, Greene and Peele, that Marlowe, Greene and Peele have severally been suspected of having a hand in them. It may, indeed, be said that till the end of the sixteenth century he struck, as an initiator, no new note. *Titus Andronicus* was most probably, as we have already seen, his first attempt at tragedy. To a young novice on his probation as a playwright the first consideration would be popularity. He found the plays to which we have referred highest in favour, and he took them as his prototypes, overdoing, as a tyro would be likely to do, the appeals to the depraved taste to which he forced himself to pander. He had probably never written blank verse before, so he took that of Marlowe, Greene and Peele as his models, and with what success he has imitated that blank verse may be judged from the fact that the drama has been attributed to those poets; but the blank verse bears a closer resemblance to that of Greene and Peele than to that of Marlowe.

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The play is full of reminiscences of the plays on which it is founded, recalling particularly *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Selimus*, and *The Jew of Malta*. Aaron is plainly the counterpart of Barabas, and it is by no means unlikely that Shakespeare was secretly laughing at his prototype, and perhaps indemnifying himself for having to make such a concession to depraved tastes by ludicrously parodying that prototype. Such at least is the impression which Aaron's confession of his enormities (see v. 1) makes on me, more particularly the couplet

Oft have I digged up dead men from their graves,  
And set them upright at their dear friends' doors,

which is plainly an allusion to the scene with Ithamore in the third Act of Marlowe's drama.

That there should be none of that wealth of poetic beauty, which is so conspicuous in the poems and became subsequently so conspicuous in his plays, is easily explained. His business here was not with poetry but with melodrama, and with melodrama very strictly confined. The problem before him was, no doubt, to produce a rival to *The Spanish Tragedy*, and *The Spanish Tragedy* must, he felt, be his mould.

Whether the play was a re-cast or adaptation of a pre-existing drama it is impossible to say. Many suppose that its original was a play entitled *Titus and Vespasian*, so often mentioned in Henslowe's Diary between April 1591 and



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January 1594, and in a German version of the drama printed in Kohn's *Shakespeare in Germany*, the character answering first to Marcus Andronicus and afterwards to Lucius is named Vespasian. But no weight can be attached to this. The German version, produced about 1600, is plainly a loose and somewhat careless paraphrase of the play as we have it, all the names are changed, Vespasian being probably suggested by its historical association with Titus. *Titus* as we have it, that is in the text of the First Folio, has evidently been the result of careful revision. The variations in the Quarto are trifling, but the variations in the First Folio are important, including the whole of the second scene of the third Act, which is not found in either of the Quartos. The unity of the play is, however, quite unmistakable; the hand throughout is the same; there is nothing to indicate that it is a recast or recension of another work. The only part reconcilable with a probability of alien interpolation is the introduction of the clown, and here the hand of Shakespeare is most apparent.

It is not with his mature works that *Titus* is to be compared, but with the dramas on which it was modelled and which it aspired to rival, and the moment such a comparison is instituted its immeasurable superiority to all of them becomes instantly apparent. Compare, for instance, its admirably propor-

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tioned, closely woven plot with the rambling, shambling skimble-skamble of *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Jew of Malta*, its measured and dignified rhetoric with the boisterous fanfarado of the worst parts of *Tamburlaine*; its fine touches of nature and occasionally piercing pathos with anything which had appeared on the English stage before. Who but Shakespeare could have placed in the mouth of Titus, when heart-crushing horrors are accumulating on horrors,

When will this fearful slumber have an end? (iii. 1)

or condensed what is condensed in

Where life hath no more interest than to breathe? (*Id.*)

In what other mint could be coined such a couplet as

O! brother, speak with possibilities,  
And do not break into these deep extremes? (*Id.*)

How noble, too, are the lines :

King, be thy thoughts imperious, like thy name;  
Is the sun dimmed that gnats do fly at it?  
The eagle suffers little birds to sing,  
And is not careful what they mean thereby,  
Knowing that with the shadow of his wings  
He can at pleasure stint their melody (iv. 4).

In such lines as—

Blood and revenge are hammering in my head (ii. 3),  
No vast obscurity or misty vale (v. 2),

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We worldly men  
Have miserable, mad, mistaking eyes (*Id.*),  
This goodly summer with your winter mixt (*Id.*),

we surely see his hand.

If anything more simply pathetic exists in dramatic poetry than the following, where can it be found?

*Lucius.* O, take this warm kiss on thy pale cold lips,  
These sorrowful drops upon thy blood-stain'd  
face,  
The last sad duties of thy noble son.

*Marcus.* Tear for tear and loving kiss for kiss  
Thy brother Marcus tenders on thy lips.

*Lucius.* Come hither, boy; come, come and learn of us  
To melt in showers: thy grandsire lov'd thee  
well:  
Many a time he danc'd thee on his knee,  
Sung thee asleep, his loving breast thy pillow;  
Many a matter hath he told to thee,  
Meet and agreeing with thine infancy:  
In that respect, then, like a loving child  
Shed yet some small drops from thy tender  
spring,  
Because kind nature doth require it so (v. 3.).

Such is the case for *Titus Andronicus*, a play which, almost always introduced with an apology for its insertion in deference to tradition, some editors propose to exclude from Shakespeare's works as "undoubtedly having no trace of his hand in it"; which Professor Dowden coolly dismisses as "the work of an anonymous writer," and which several Shakespearean critics,

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in elaborate commentaries on his dramas, have waived aside and decline to discuss for the same reason.

It is one of the chief functions of criticism to further the sound and candid study of our great national classics, and to call to account what is unsound, misleading and perverse. There is not only nothing to justify the theory that this drama is not from Shakespeare's hand, but to deprive him of it is to deprive ourselves of the most interesting and important illustration we have of the work of his apprenticeship. Criticism cannot, I venture to think, be more usefully employed at the present time than in instituting a rigid inquiry into Shakespearean paradoxes.

### III

## SOPHOCLES AND SHAKESPEARE AS THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL TEACHERS

**I**N the fragments which represent all that remains of the *De Republicâ* of Cicero there is a passage over which many a thoughtful reader must have paused :—

And there will not be one law at Rome and another at Athens, one law to-day and another law to-morrow ; but the same law everlasting and unchangeable will bind all nations at all times ; and there will be one common Master and Ruler of all, even God, the framer, the arbitrator, and the proposer of this law. And he who will not obey it will be an exile from himself, and, despising the nature of man, will, by virtue of that very act, suffer the greatest of all penalties, even though he shall have escaped all other punishments which can be imagined.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nec erit alia lex Romae, alia Athenis, alia nunc, alia posthac ; sed et omnes gentes et omni tempore una lex et sempiterna et immutabilis continebit ; unusque erit communis quasi Magister et imperator omnium, Deus ; ille legis hujus inventor, disceptator, lator : cui qui non parebit, ipse se fugiet, ac naturam hominis aspernatus hoc ipso luet maximas poenas, etiam si cetera supplicia quae putantur, effugerit. *De Repub.* lib. iii. cap. 22.

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But the splendid prophecy remains still unfulfilled; unfulfilled, though embodying so many of those essential truths which, consciously or unconsciously uttered by sage and poet, are man's most precious legacy to man; unfulfilled, though Chrysippus and Cleanthes, whose teaching formally inspired it, would probably have seen in it not the adumbration but the reflection of what was to be; unfulfilled, though Christianity in dethroning Stoicism inherited not only all that was most vital and virtuous in its tenets, discipline and genius, but, taking its stand on the same Pisgah, looked forward with the same confidence to the same consummation. But not, alas, for long. It is no part of my task to trace the mournful history which has been written too faithfully by Gibbon, and which Swift has presented in an allegory less ludicrous than the simple truth. In the history of the disintegration and corruption of Christianity, from the first great schism in the eighth century to the completion of the Reformation in the sixteenth, the humorist will probably discern the most stupendous farce, and the philanthropist the most stupendous tragedy which has ever been enacted on the theatre of the world. But the religion of Christ has survived; survived False Decretals and Constantine Donations, Babylonish Captivities and Western Schisms, Hussite Wars and Bartholomew Massacres, High Commission Courts and Test Acts, Further Security Acts and

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Schism Bills, survived, but not survived unscathed. And woeful indeed is the penalty which its ministers are now paying for the sin and folly of their predecessors: to find themselves still fettered by dogmas which have sprung in some cases from interested perversions in textual interpretation, and which are in some cases the mere relics of effete controversies—controversies as contemptible in their origin as in their object—to find themselves still torn with feuds, Church against Church, and sect against sect, in a world working instinctively toward sympathy and fusion. The dream, then, of the early Christians Time has falsified, even as it falsified the dream of the Stoics.

It is said that those who are living in the midst of a revolution are ignorant of what is taking place, but dulness itself can scarcely fail to perceive what mighty changes are, with unprecedented rapidity, passing over the world. Upwards of sixty years ago, Tennyson wrote—

E'en now we hear with inward strife  
A motion toiling through the gloom—  
The Spirit of the years to come  
Yearning to mix himself with Life.  
A slow-develop'd strength awaits  
Completion in a painful school;  
Phantoms of other kinds of rule,  
New majesties of mighty states—  
The warders of the growing hour;  
But vague in vapour, hard to mark;  
And round them sea and air are dark  
With great contrivances of power.

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And how much which was then vague in vapour has since defined itself, not alone in the stupendous triumphs of physical science, but in all that makes towards the realization of Cicero's prophecy—world federation, universal brotherhood, common interests and common aims wherever civilized man is labouring, the gradual dissolution of everything which obscures, the gradual definition of everything that recalls the long-lost millennial vision of

That God which ever lives and loves,  
One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off divine event  
To which the whole creation moves.

But no hour is so dreary and depressing as the hour which precedes the dawn, when gloom unconquered is made visible by light, and bat and owl still hold their own, detected but unscared. Plutarch compared ancient Alexandria to a huge mixing-bowl and loving-cup in which all the creeds and religions of the universe were seething together; and if that was true of ancient Alexandria it is most assuredly true of the world in which it is our lot to search for truth. We may be forgiven for suspecting that the track is lost, that rudder and compass have gone by the board, and that it is our lot to stand, like Tiresias, waiting for the prophetic voice, but hearing only—

*ἀγνώτα φθόγγον ὀρνίθων κακῶ  
κλάζοντας ὀστρῶ καὶ βεβαρβαρωμένῳ,*



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—an unintelligible jangle of prophetic birds clanging in evil excitement, jabbering most outlandishly.

But, happily, there are other voices audible than those of the sectary and the priest. It was believed in ancient times that God, one form under many names, spoke through the lips of inspired poets: that they appeared generation after generation, a perpetual witness to Him, vindicating His will, interpreting His dispensations; that in the light of divine wisdom they read human nature and human life, and that it was their office not only to teach man his duties to God, to the State and to himself, but to strengthen and temper him for their fulfilment. “Children,” says Aristophanes, “have the schoolmaster to teach them, but when men are grown-up the poets are their teachers.”

*Τοῖς μὲν γὰρ παιδαρίοισιν  
ἔστι διδάσκαλος ὅστις φράζει, τοῖς ἡβῶσι δὲ ποιηταί.<sup>1</sup>*

We have long begun to feel more and more that the message which God sent by the Evangelists, save only in the record of the perfect life, has been miserably marred and blurred in the telling. But how sun-clear, how consistent with themselves and with each other, how corresponsive and mutually corroborative are the messages which have come to us through His other evangelists. The authors of the Psalms,

<sup>1</sup> *Ranae*, 1054-5.

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the Hebrew Prophets, Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Virgil, Dante, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Wordsworth, Shelley, and we may add, whether *longo intervallo* or not Posterity will decide, Tennyson and Browning. Have they not pierced through different time-veils to the same eternal truths and, preached, each in his own manner and with his own symbols, the same authentic gospel? (The more men come to distinguish between what is local and what is universal, between what is accidental and what is essential, the more will they come to realize that as ethical truth is the immediate test of theological truth, so poetical truth is the final test of both.) A popular religious creed is, like living man, a composite creation; in part, and in part only, divine and partaking therefore of the imperishable. But in this mixed world it can, like everything else, only be energetic so long as it remains composite. In due course all that is perishable succumbs to the law of dissolution, and all that is imperishable passes into poetry. Where is the creed, the immortal part of which filtered into the Iliad and the Odyssey, the lyrics of Pindar, and the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles?—empty fable. Where are the creeds of Mediaeval Italy, and of Puritan England? All that could die of them dead, all that was deathless in them absorbed into the Divine Comedy, and into the Epics of Milton. Very truly did the Roman

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poet observe that Nature and Wisdom, in other words the voice of God and the voice of really wise men, are never at variance with each other, and with great justice and happiness did Conyers Middleton say, "All truths partake of a common essence and naturally coincide with each other, and, like the drops of rain which fall separately into the river, mix themselves at once with the stream and strengthen the general current." <sup>1</sup>

Now Poetry, not the sense-pampering siren which too often usurps her name, but Poetry in her excellence and majesty is the incarnation of ideal truth, the breath and finer spirit, as Wordsworth puts it, of all knowledge. It is, therefore, her august prerogative if not to supply for us the place she supplied in ancient Greece, the place of theology, at least to stand to Theology in the same relation as Sapience, in Spenser's sublime fiction, stands to the Divinity—

The sovereign darling, the consentient voice,  
Clad like a Queene in royall robes most fit  
For so great powre and peerelesse majesty,  
And all with gemmes and jewels gorgeously  
Adorn'd, that brighter than the starres appeare  
And make her native brightnes seem more cleare.<sup>2</sup>

She will corroborate, she will fortify, she will extend all that is vital and precious, not merely in the teaching of the Creed of Creeds, but in

<sup>1</sup> Preface to his *Free Inquiry*. Works, vol. i. p. vii.

<sup>2</sup> An Hymne of Heavenly Beauty.

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the teaching of every creed which has taken form among the children of men. Other missions she has, many other missions, but this is her highest. And therefore Matthew Arnold has prophesied an immense future for poetry.

More and more will mankind discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Our religion parading evidences such as the popular mind relies on now; our philosophy pluming itself on its reasonings about causation and finite and infinite being; what are they but the shadows and dreams and false shows of knowledge? The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously, and the more we perceive their hollowness the more we shall prize the breath and finer spirit of knowledge offered to us by poetry.<sup>1</sup>

To Arnold, for some reason, Shakespeare does not seem to appeal. On his theology and ethics he is absolutely silent, and he has nowhere given any indication that he found, or ever sought in him, what he sought and found in other demigods of poetry. But Sophocles he ranks first among his moral and spiritual teachers.

Be his  
My special praise, whose even-balanc'd soul,  
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,  
Business could not make dull, nor passion wild;  
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole,  
The mellow glory of the Attic stage,  
Singer of sweet Colonus and its child.

Sophocles and Shakespeare stand by general consent at the head of tragedy, and tragedy, as Aris-

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to Ward's *English Poets*.

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tole justly observes, is the supreme expression of poetry, architecturally as well as in relation to what it comprises and at what it aims. We are here concerned only with Sophocles and Shakespeare as Seers and Prophets, as interpreters of life and as religious and moral teachers. But so remarkable are the analogies between them, biographically, between their personal characters and their private lives; historically, between the political and intellectual conditions under which the genius of each was moulded and accomplished its work; critically, in the evolution of their art, of their style and of their theodicy, that it may be interesting briefly to advert to them.

Both, sprung from the middle classes, were essentially aristocratic in temper and sympathy. Both had an almost superstitious reverence for prescription. Both were profoundly interested in the public events of their time, employing the drama—of this there can be little doubt—as a commentary on current state affairs and a direct means of political education, the one as the ally of Pericles, the other as the ally of the ministers of Elizabeth and James. Both were distinguished by their ardent patriotism. Both loved and both have immortalized in description the place of their birth, the famous chorus in the *Oedipus Coloneus* having its counterpart in the numberless passages in Shakespeare's poems and plays recalling Stratford. In both the temperament and pursuits of the poet and of the philoso-

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pher co-existed with the tastes and habits of men of the world. Both were shrewd men of business. Shakespeare, as is notorious, made a larger fortune out of the stage than any of his contemporaries except Alleyn; that Sophocles had as keen an eye for the main chance, and was similarly successful, is placed beyond doubt by what Aristophanes tells us.<sup>1</sup> In youth and middle age both were voluptuaries; tradition on this point is so persistent and unanimous that it cannot be put aside, and by no poets in the world has the terrible and degrading tyranny of mere passion been so intimately and appallingly described.<sup>2</sup> In both the same easy temper, geniality, good-nature, modesty and pleasant wit not only disarmed the envy and ill-feeling which their parts and prosperity might otherwise have excited, but made them universally beloved. The delightful glimpse which we get of Sophocles at Chios cited by Athenaeus from Ion;<sup>3</sup> the picture which Aristophanes gives of him in the *Frogs*; the testimony of the Anonymous Biographer, that he was "loved in every

<sup>1</sup> *Pax*, 695-699, Aristophanes, it may be added, may certainly be trusted, for he had no prejudice against Sophocles.

<sup>2</sup> That this is no exaggeration will be admitted by all who compare the *Rape of Lucrece*, *passim*, but especially stanzas 100-101, *Venus and Adonis*, stanzas 134-5, and Sonnet cxxix. with Sophocles, *Fragment*s, 154 and 856. Compare also the remark quoted from him by Plato, *Rep.* i. p. 329. *Antigone*, 781-800, may also be compared.

<sup>3</sup> *Deipnos*, xiii. 81.

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way by all men,"<sup>1</sup> are singularly parallel to what tradition records of Shakespeare. We remember Chettle's, "myself have seen his demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes"; Ben Jonson's, "I loved the man, and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any, for he was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature"; Aubrey's "handsome, well-shaped man, very good companie, and of a very readie, smoothe, and pleasant wit"; the epithets which Scoloker and Ben Jonson apply to him of "friendly," and "gentle," exactly recall the epithet by which Aristophanes distinguishes Sophocles—*εὐκολος*.<sup>2</sup> The Athens of Sophocles and the London of Shakespeare were, like most literary centres, tormented with cliques and feuds, but from these distractions both poets stood placidly aloof. Nothing associates either of them with any faction, or with any quarrel or controversy. It may be doubted whether a sarcasm or acrimonious word ever fell from the lips of either. One or two good-natured, but singularly discriminating remarks, represent all the criticism which Sophocles passed on his brother poets, and, in the few allusions to his contemporaries which may be traced in Shakespeare, we discern the same temper. In both the same sentimental attach-

<sup>1</sup> τοῦ ἤθους τοσαύτη γέγονε χάρις, ὥστε πάντα καὶ πρὸς ἀπάντων αὐτὸν στέργεσθαι.

<sup>2</sup> ὁ δ' εὐκολος μὲν ἐνθάδ', εὐκολος δ' ἐκεῖ. (*Frogs*, 82.)

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ment to what was established, and the same reasoned distrust of innovation and experiment led to the same conservatism in religion and in politics. The attitude of Sophocles towards the conventional creeds of Athens is precisely that of Shakespeare towards Protestant Christianity. Both practically resolve the symbols into what is symbolized, but by both the symbols themselves are treated with superstitious reverence. In his later years Sophocles filled the office of priest at the shrine of Halon; the solemn words initiating Shakespeare's Will must not, indeed, be pressed, as they may, and probably do, represent mere formula, but they at least indicate his respect for the religion of his forefathers and, coupled with the epilogue to *The Tempest*, warrant us in concluding that, like Sophocles, he recognized the wisdom of orthodoxy. In no other poets is there the same union in the same degree of aesthetic sensibility and profound reflection, of inspired insight into spiritual truth, of sympathetic insight into dramatic truth; the same comprehensiveness in combination with the same minute and exact accuracy in observation.<sup>1</sup> They seem, both of them, to reflect life

<sup>1</sup> Of this we have a very striking illustration in the touches with which natural objects such as flowers, trees, birds, animals, reptiles and insects are described by both poets. See Shakespeare's "blue-vein'd violet" (*Venus and Adonis*, 125), "mole, cinque spotted, like the crimson drops i' the bottom of a cowslip" (*Cymb.*, ii. 2), "furr'd moss" (*Id.*, iv. 22), "the ripest mulberry that scarce will



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and nature with the impartial fidelity of a mirror.

It may sound paradoxical to associate humour with Sophocles, or to institute any comparison in this respect between the poet who created Falstaff and Touchstone and the poet whose comic achievements must have been bounded by the Satyric Drama. And yet it is impossible not to feel that even here there must, at bottom, have been much in common between the two poets. The essence of the humour most characteristic of Shakespeare is irony, a subtle and profound sense of the relation of what seems to what is, tempered partly with pity and partly with pleasantry. It reveals itself in the words which he places in Puck's mouth, "Lord, what fools these mortals be"; in the famous speech of Jacques; in the whole scheme of *Much Ado About Nothing*, in the whole scheme of the *Tempest*. In its highest manifestation it is always rooted in seriousness and always in alli-

*hold the handling*" (*Cor.*, iii. 2), "the willow that shows his hoar-leaves in the glassy stream" (*Ham.*, iv. 7), "the ouzel-cock with orange-tawny bill" (*M. N. D.*, iii. 1), "the russet-pated chough," "the shard-borne beetle" (*Macbeth*, iii. 2), "the gilded newt" (*Timon*, iv. 3), "heavy-gaited toads" (*Rich. II.*, 3, 2), "red-hipp'd humble bee," (*M. N. D.*, iv. 1), the points of a horse (*Venus and Adonis*, 295-98). With all these may be compared Sophocles' equally minute and exact description of Nature's minutiae in *Fragments*, 24, 26, 177, 335, 362, 365, 433, 593, 620, 691, 696, *Oedip. Col.*, 685, *Ajax*, 168-71. *Antigone*, 1133-4. And for sea descriptions cf. *Timon*, v. 2, and *Antigone*, 586-592.

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ance with wisdom and truth. To us the humour of Shakespeare appeals most in its less grave and less recondite aspects, not as the ally of profound thought but as the ally of every mirth-provoking form which wit, which persiflage, which buffoonery, which satire, which ridicule, which reflection and commentary can assume. Of this there are no traces in Sophocles beyond a passage or two in the *Ajax*, and two in the *Antigone*,<sup>1</sup> and here it is so thin that it is doubtful whether it is meant. Of his satyric dramas where it would be appropriate we have no examples extant. But his irony, particularly in the *Philoctetes*, and many touches in that and in other dramas, coupled with what has been recorded of his personal idiosyncrasies and conversation, prove at least his kinship, as a philosophical humorist, with our own poet.

In conclusion we come to what is perhaps the most striking of all the characteristics common to the two men. Never have parts and powers so noble and so versatile, never has all that constitutes, aesthetically, morally, intellectually human temperament and character been blended so harmoniously. Of their lives as private men we know enough to know with what fullness those lives were lived. At once philosophers and artists, students of books and students of life and nature, men of business and men of society,

<sup>1</sup> The cowardice of Ulysses, *Ajax*, 73-90: the watchman before Creon, *Antigone*, 223-331, and 384-445.

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indulging freely and equally in the pleasures sought by the voluptuary and the pleasures which appeal to the finer senses and the mind, they appear to have realised, both in temper and in experience, the ideal of man, as man for this world is constituted. As we note in them, both as men and as artists, no deficiency, so we discern in them no excess; all is balance, all is measure. If, as dramatists, they were true to nature and passion, and speak in sympathy the language of both, as philosophers, they were loyal to reason and the mean, of which, with equal fidelity, they are the interpreters and prophets.

The parallel between the relative position of the two poets to their predecessors, and between the historical conditions under which their work was accomplished is not less remarkable. Both lived at periods pre-eminently propitious to the development of poetry, and more particularly of dramatic poetry. The events and movements which, between the expulsion of Hippias and the administration of Pericles, initiated the revolution of all that was susceptible of revolution in the centre of Hellenic life corresponded in effect to the Renaissance and the Reformation with us. Marathon and Salamis were to the contemporaries of Sophocles what the defeat of the Armada was to the England of Shakespeare. They were struggles in which all that is dearest

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and most vital to a nation was at stake, and under their fierce stimulus not the passions only but every energy and every faculty in man became exalted and intensified. The danger passed. Victories, impossible, so men believed, without the direct and miraculous intervention of Heaven had preserved the pious and confounded the impious. Salamis, Plataea and Mycale were immediately succeeded by the Golden Age of Greek poetry, the defeat of the Armada by our own Golden Age. Nor is this surprising. The momentum attained in intellectual and artistic activity in the periods preceding these crises acquired, from the energy and enthusiasm created by the crises themselves, trebled and quadrupled impetus. Thus the crude experiments of Phrynichus, Chœrilus and Pratinas in Athens, and the crude expressions of our own Romantic and Classical Drama developed with astonishing rapidity into the masterpieces of Aeschylus and Sophocles, and into the masterpieces of Marlowe and Shakespeare.

The audience which Sophocles addressed was in many respects curiously analogous to that which Shakespeare addressed. Conservative and patriotic under circumstances which intensified such sentiments into passions, they not only cherished with peculiar fondness all that reminded them of the glory of their fatherland and of those who had, either in the past or in the

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present, contributed to it, but gratefully and reverently associated with that glory the Divine Power whose supposed interposition had been its protection and extension. This accounts for the attitude of the two poets towards the state religion, for the orthodox Polytheism of Sophocles, for the equally orthodox Christian Protestantism of Shakespeare. How far either accepted, as articles of belief, what in both these creeds rationalism resolves into mythology, it is, of course, impossible to say, and in all likelihood they would have been unable to say themselves. As poets they had each the good fortune to live at one of those epochs in which imagination and reason harmoniously coalesce, mutually illuminative not mutually destructive. They had probably no difficulty in accepting and revering the fictions of popular superstition, partly on sentimental grounds, and partly because of the truths which such fictions symbolized. To Sophocles had descended a religion which, whatever may have been the sentiments of the vulgar, had, as accepted by the more enlightened, been purged of its grosser superstitions; and what preceding poets and philosophers had effected for the religion of Sophocles, the Reformation had effected for that of Shakespeare.

As artists, and in their relation to the historical development of the drama respectively represented by them, the parallel between the two poets is equally close. In both we

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have the realization of Aristotle's *εὐφυής* as distinguished from his *μανικός*, of his *ἐξεταστικός* as distinguished from his *εὐπλαστος*. No poets are more impersonal, so balanced, so lucidly and comprehensively reflective. Both were original, and yet neither was an inaugurator. Both modified and carried to perfection what had been initiated and formulated by others. The work of the one was the crown and flower of Attic tragedy, of the other the crown and flower of Elizabethan tragedy. Both differed from their predecessors in the subtle elaboration of their art; in the exquisite mechanism of their plots; in the studiously antithetical disposition of their *dramatis personae*; in the refinement of their all-pervading irony, and in their essentially ethical conception of the basis of tragedy. Between their style and the phases through which it passed there is the same close parallel. Plutarch, in a well-known passage, tells us that Sophocles spoke of himself as having first affected the pomp and magniloquence of Aeschylus, then, as having abandoned that to form a harsh and over-elaborate style of his own, till he at last adopted one which was most appropriate for the expression of character.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ὁ Σοφοκλῆς ἔλεγε, τὸν Δισχύλου διαπεπαιχῶς ὄγκον, εἶτα τὸ πικρὸν καὶ κατὰ τεχνον τῆς αὐτοῦ κατασκευῆς, εἰς τρίτον ἤδη τὸ τῆς λέξεως μεταβάλλειν εἶδος, ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἠθικώτατον καὶ βέλτιστον.

(*De Profectibus in Virtutibus*, vii.)

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This is precisely the history of the phases through which Shakespeare's style passed. He began by imitating Marlowe, he then, as notably in *Romeo and Juliet* and the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, employed a style too ornate and artificial for drama, till, after the first edition of *Hamlet*, he formulated the style characteristic of his third and fourth period work, a style as nearly as possible the counterpart of Sophocles' third manner. The Anonymous Biographer observes of Sophocles, that such was his subtle power of expression that in "half a line" or in "a single phrase" he could call up a whole character.<sup>1</sup> With equal justice does Hazlitt say of Shakespeare, "A word, an epithet paints a whole scene or throws us back whole years in the history of the person represented."<sup>2</sup>

In their presentation of life the philosophy of both as tragic poets underwent the same change. Both began not indeed by being pessimists, but by bordering on pessimism; both ended in being absolute optimists. If each, in the middle period of his dramatic work, the one in the *Antigone*, the *Ajax*, the *Oedipus Rex* and the *Trachiniae*; the other in the dramas of which *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *Lear* are typical, moved only in the Inferno of tragedy, each emerged, the one in the *Oedipus*

<sup>1</sup> οἶδε δὲ καιρὸν συμμετρῆσαι καὶ πράγματα, ὥστε ἐκ μικροῦ ἡμιστιχίου, ἢ λέξεως μιᾶς, ἔλθον ἠθοποιεῖν πρόσωπον.

<sup>2</sup> *Lectures on the English Poets* (Lecture iii.)

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*Coloneus* and the *Philoctetes*, the other in *Cymbeline* and the *Tempest*, "to see again the stars."

But to return to the particular subject of this essay. It might, at first sight, appear that there is one striking and essential distinction between these poets as teachers and philosophers, namely, that while Shakespeare, like Aristotle, appears to sever theology from ethics, Sophocles on the contrary appears to subordinate ethics to theology. We remember that, among the Greeks, the very name of Sophocles was a synonym for piety, that, beloved and beloved, he was the peculiar favourite of Heaven, *θεοφιλῆς ὡς οὐκ ἄλλος*,<sup>1</sup> that in every one of his plots the theological element is prominent; that in two of them the *ἀμαρτία* is an offence, in one case a very slight offence against a deity, that in two others insult offered to a deity brings on the catastrophe. We remember the words of the Chorus to repining Electra, "Courage, my child, courage, I pray you, Zeus is still mighty in heaven, and he overseeth and ruleth all things";<sup>2</sup> the confidence of the Theban elders in "those laws of range sublime whose Father is Olympus alone . . . mighty is the Deity in them and he grows not old,"<sup>3</sup> and the immense importance attached to *εὐσέβεια* in the *Ajax* and in the *Philoctetes* :

<sup>1</sup> *Anon. Biograph.*

<sup>2</sup> *Electra*, 173-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Oedip. Rex*, 865-71.



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. . . . . εὐσεβεῖν τὰ πρὸς θεοὺς  
ὡς τᾶλλα πάντα δεύτερ' ἡγεῖται πατὴρ  
Zeus, ἡ γὰρ εὐσέβεια συνθνήσκει βροτοῖς,  
κἂν ζῶσι κἂν θάνωσιν, οὐκ ἀπολλύται.

(. . . Be ye pious towards the gods, since our father Zeus accounts all second unto this; for piety dies not with men, be they alive or be they dead it liveth on.)

We remember how Antigone had compensation in "the faith that looks through death," and how Heaven adjusted the balance for Oedipus. Chorus after Chorus, gnome after gnome crowd on our memories pointing to the same conclusion. Take for example what he expresses in the Fragments of the *Theseus in Sicily*.

σοφὸς γὰρ οὐδεὶς πλὴν ὅν ἂν τιμᾷ θεός.  
ἀλλ' εἰς θεοὺς ὀρώντα, κἂν ἔξω δίκης  
χωρεῖν κελεύῃ, κείσ' ὁδοιπορεῖν χρεῶν·  
αἰσχροὺς γὰρ οὐδὲν ὦν ὑφηγοῦνται θεοί.

(He alone is wise whom God honours. A man should look to the gods, and should he be ordered even to quit the path of right, thither should he bend his steps, for the gods never lead the way to what is base.)

In Shakespeare, on the other hand, the theological element appears at first to be scarcely discernible. In no play is the *ἀμαρτία* a sin against God as distinguished from a sin against man. In none of his plots is Destiny represented as an agent antecedent to and independent of the action comprised in the play itself. With the possible exceptions of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* the fate of his protagonists and of those who are involved in their ruin requires no supernatural solution. They pay the penalty for the violation of the moral law, for guilt or for excess. Thus, not to

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enumerate the long list of obvious criminals, prodigality and intemperance ruin Timon; pride swollen to insolence Coriolanus; ill-weaved ambition Hotspur; insolent virtue degrades Angelo; Lear falls through the vice of the Akolast; rashness destroys Romeo and Juliet; unbridled sensuality works the ruin of Antony.

Still more conspicuous is the absence of the theological element where we should especially have expected it. "Men and women," says Brewer,<sup>1</sup> "are made to drain the cup of misery to the dregs, but as from the depths into which they have fallen by their own weakness or the weakness of others, the poet never raises them in violation of the inexorable laws of nature, so neither does he put a new song in their mouths or any expression of confidence in God's righteous dealing. With as precise and hard a hand as Bacon does he sunder the celestial from the terrestrial kingdom, the things of earth from the things of heaven, resolutely and sternly refusing to look beyond the limits of this world, to borrow comfort and injustice from the life to come." Neither Cordelia, nor Desdemona, neither Constance nor Imogen in their darkest hour express any confidence in the mercy and justice of Heaven. Nay, Imogen distinctly says, turning to Pisanio—

Thou art all the comfort

The gods will diet me with.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Essay on Shakespeare, in his *Lectures and Addresses*.

<sup>2</sup> *Cymb.*, iii. 4.

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“Did Heaven look on and would not take their part?” is Macduff’s ejaculation when he hears of the slaughter of his wife and children.<sup>1</sup> “Are there no stones in Heaven but what serve for the thunder?” are Othello’s words when Iago’s villainy is divulged.<sup>2</sup> Othello himself, falling by a fate as terrible as it is undeserved, dies without a syllable of hope. “The rest is silence,” are the ominous words with which Hamlet takes leave of life. When Gloucester supposes himself to be standing on the brink of death, in the farewell he takes of this world he has no anticipation of any other—all he contemplates is “to shake patiently his great affliction off.”<sup>3</sup> So die Lear, Hotspur, Buckingham, Beaufort, Romeo, Antony, Eros, Enobarbus, Macbeth, Mercutio, Laertes. So die Brutus, Coriolanus, John. In the Duke’s speech in *Measure for Measure* death is contemplated merely as an escape from the pains and discomforts of life. So, too, in the dirge in *Cymbeline*; in the soliloquy of Posthumus; in the consolations addressed by the gaoler to Posthumus. Even Isabella, dedicated as she was to Religion, in fortifying Claudio to meet death draws no weapon from the armoury of Faith. Not less remarkable is the absence or subordination of the theological element in passages directly didactic, and in the reflections of characters dis-

<sup>1</sup> *Macbeth* iv. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Othello* v. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Lear* iv. 6.

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tinguished by meditative wisdom. A bulky volume would scarcely sum up the ethical and political reflections scattered up and down these plays; a few pages would comprise all that could be put down as exclusively theological.

All this is true enough. And yet I would venture to say, that if a thoughtful man, after going attentively through the thirty-seven plays, were asked what the prevailing impression made on him was, he would reply: the awful reverence which Shakespeare shows for Religion—for the mysterious relation which exists between Man and God. The sense of the utter contemptibleness and unintelligibleness of man and life without reference to the Divine is not stronger or more pervading in Pindar, Aeschylus and Sophocles. It seems clear that, unlike Sophocles, he did not accept the popular religion on its metaphysical side, that is he did not accept its solution of what is insoluble by reason and experience, but he accepted it on the ethical side, and he revered it accordingly. There is a peculiar solemnity and tenderness in his allusions to Christ and to the teachings of Christ. Of the respect, moreover, which he entertained for Christianity as a religion, of his conviction of its being able to fulfil all the ends of religion in men of the highest type of intelligence and sensibility we require no further proof than his *Henry V.* But it was not here, to judge from his work as a Dramatist, that he himself

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found rest. Goethe has said that man was not born to solve the mystery of life, but to attempt to solve it, that he might keep within the limits of the knowable. And it is within the limits of the knowable that Shakespeare's Theology confines itself. Starting simply, as Gervinus observes, from the point that man is born with powers and faculties which he is to use, and with powers of self-regulation and self-determination which are to direct aright his action, the 'Whence we are' and the 'Whither we are going,' are problems for which he has no solution. "Why am I? Make that demand to thy Creator, it sufficeth me thou art." With man in action, with God manifesting himself in Law, his theology of life begins and ends—beyond all is awful silence. As with Goethe, so with him,

Ruhn oben die Sterne  
Und unten die Gräber.  
Betracht' sie genauer,  
Und siehe, so melden  
Im Busen der helden  
Sich wandelnde Schauer  
Und ernste Gefühle.  
Doch rufen von drüben  
Die Stimmen der Geister,  
Die Stimmen der Meister:  
Versäumt nicht, zu üben  
Die Kräfte des Guten!

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<sup>1</sup> Stars silent rest o'er us,  
Graves under us silent,  
And while earnest thou gazest  
Comes boding of terror,

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*Ubi elegeris, certus imminentium ordo*, as Tacitus expresses it.

Shakespeare's Theology, then, may be said to resolve itself into the recognition of Universal Law, divinely appointed, immutable, inexorable and ubiquitous; controlling the physical world, controlling the moral world; vindicating itself in the smallest facts of life as in the most stupendous convulsions of nature and of society. In morality, it is maintained by the observance of the mean on the one hand, and the fulfilment of such duties and obligations as are imposed by nature and society on the other hand. In politics it is maintained by the subordination of the individual to the state and of the state to the Higher Law. As in life, so in his tragedies which are the simple reflections of life, it is the disturbance of this equilibrium, primarily, perhaps, in the ill-regulated passions or the ill-regulated mind, in the ill-governed home, or the ill-ordered palace of a single individual, which initiates all. Take *Romeo and Juliet*, it is a simple illustration. Observe the home out of which Juliet comes, the mother who does not know her child's age,

Come phantasm and error  
Perplexing the bravest  
With doubt and misgiving.  
But heard are the voices,  
Heard are the sages,  
The Worlds and the Ages,  
Choose well, your choice is  
Brief but yet endless. (Carlyle.)

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the impure and worldly father, the coarse and corrupting nurse, discord there. Discord, too, in the home of Romeo, discord in the home swelling into discord in the state, not to be resolved till Romeo, Juliet, Paris and Tybalt are lying in one grave.

Capulet, Montagu,

See what a scourge is laid upon your hate,  
That Heav'n finds means to kill your joys with love,  
And I, for winking at your discords, too,  
Have lost a brace of kinsmen : All are punish'd.

Take *Lear*, the most stupendous and terrific of human fictions, comprising every element of horror and pathos in the most appalling shapes they can assume, agony of mind, insanity, physical suffering, parricide, adulterous passion, suicide, murder ; feuds between children and parents, between brother and brother, between sister and sister ; innocence and purity, the sport of cruel fortune ; old age brutally outraged ; God and man deaf to mercy, bent—the One on vengeance the other on error and crime. On what does all this hinge ? On the intemperance of Lear,—for he is, as the poet has carefully indicated, responsible for his insanity, on his ill-regulated family and ill-regulated household, and on an act of immorality on the part of Gloucester. Take *Othello*, what initiates the anarchy here ? The vindication of a law—the accidental suspension of which causes half the mischief in life—the law that strength cannot be subordinated to weakness. In preferring

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Cassio to Iago, Othello assisted in violating that law ; all that followed followed from the accident that Iago was Iago. Thus an act, which was a deliberate act, initiates, and chances, which are incalculable, aggravate, complicate, resolve.

Of individual characters take the many who fall by simple intemperance. The ruin of Timon, Coriolanus, Hotspur, Young Seward and I think we may add Angelo, is wrought mediately or immediately by qualities which are in moderation virtues. On the law of the mean and the danger involved in transgressing it—in transgressing on the side of virtue as well as on the side of vice—Shakespeare is never weary of enlarging.

The fire that mounts the liquor till 't o'erflow  
In seeming to augment it, wastes it.

(*Henry VIII.*, i. 1.)

As surfeit is the father of much fast,  
So every scope, by the immoderate use  
Turns to restraint.

(*Measure for Measure*, i. 2.)

Goodness, growing to a plurisy,  
Dies in his own too much.

(*Hamlet*, iv. 7.)

When workmen strive to do better than well,  
They do confound their skill with covetousness.

(*King John*, iv. 2.)

What illustration the law which links sin and folly with suffering and calamity finds in this poet I need not stay to show. No Greek poet holds up the mirror to those dread truths more



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steadily. But though there is no necessity for illustrating this, I cannot forbear remarking that the key to *Troilus and Cressida*—that play which Coleridge and Gervinus seem to me to have so inexplicably misunderstood—is to be found in the conversation between Paris and Hector in the second scene of the second act. Speaking of Helen, Hector says:—

These moral laws  
Of nature and of nations speak aloud  
To have her back return'd : Thus to persist  
In doing wrong extenuates not wrong,  
But makes it much more heavy. Hector's opinion  
Is this, in way of truth : yet ne'ertheless  
My spritely brethren, I propend to you  
In resolution to keep Helen still ;  
For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependence  
Upon our joint and several dignities.

The whole play, even in its apparently insignificant details, is an illustration of the anarchy and mischief resulting from a conflict between the Moral Law and the so-called Law of Honour—that law which so often braves God out of fear of man, and outrages man while insulting God.

Not less clearly does Shakespeare discern, and in discerning vindicate, the vaster and more complex manifestations of Law—the harmony of the ordered state, the harmony of the ordered universe—

The Heavens themselves, the planets and this centre,  
Observe degree, priority, and place,  
Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,  
Office and custom, in all line of order ;

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Take but degree away, untune that string,  
And hark what discord follows. Each thing meets  
In mere oppugnancy. The bounded waters  
Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,  
And make a sop of all this solid globe.  
Strength should be lord of imbecility,  
And the rude son should strike his father dead.  
Force should be right; or rather, right and wrong  
(Between whose endless jar justice resides)  
Should lose their names; and so should justice too;  
Then everything includes itself in power,  
Power into will, will into appetite,  
And appetite, an universal wolf,  
Must make perforce an universal prey,  
And last eat up himself.<sup>1</sup>

In the historical plays what have we but a series of illustrations of the mischief and misery which ensue, both particularly to individuals and generally to states, when the equilibrium of balanced power is disturbed, when men, for their own ends, jar that harmony which should, on earth, vibrate in unison with the mightier harmonies of the Heavens.

Government, though high and low and lower,  
Put into parts, doth keep in one consent,  
Congreeing in a full and natural close,  
Like music; therefore doth Heaven divide  
The state of man in divers functions,  
Setting endeavour in continual motion,  
To which is fixed, as an aim or butt,  
Obedience.<sup>2</sup>

And woe to the endeavour, woe to the aim  
which is either disobedient or in rebellion!

It is, then, in the recognition of universal Law,  
and in tracing the connexion of phenomena with

<sup>1</sup> *Troilus and Cressida*, i. 3.      <sup>2</sup> *Henry V.* i. 2.

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that law ; in the clear perception that as, in the tossing wastes of the wildest sea, not a wave gathers, not a bubble breaks but in obedience to Law ; so, in what appears to be the anarchy of human life all is ordered—ordered not as in the physical world *κατὰ λόγον* because it was the law in itself, but *μετὰ λόγον* because it has the law within and for itself : it is in the clear recognition of this—in the recognition of the ubiquity of law—in the vision of the “ever during calm subsisting at the heart of endless agitation” that the Theology of Shakespeare mainly expresses itself.

In turning from Shakespeare to Sophocles we appear, as I have said before, to be on different ground. And in some respects we are. But if we guard carefully against confounding what is accidental with what is essential we shall, I think, find that their theology as well as their ethics are practically identical. In the first place we must not be misguided by the apparent polytheism of the Greek poet. For this polytheism, retained partly, no doubt, in deference to popular superstition, and partly because of its convenience as symbolizing local and particular functions or manifestations of Divine power, is in intent and in effect simple monotheism. Some of these deities, associated as they are with particular incidents and particular places, but having no energy independent of their connexion with the higher and universal powers,

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are merely traditionary. Others again, notably Eros and Cypris, are little more than personifications of human passions, contemplated in relation to actuality, or in relation to effect. It is not till we come to the great trinity, Zeus, Apollo Pythius, and Athene that we are brought into the presence of the godhead of Sophoclean theology. We need in no way be perplexed with the fact that Sophocles has not altogether disentangled his Zeus from the Zeus of the old mythology; that the god is still the lover of Alcmena and Danae, and has some of his old frailties still hanging about him. What concerns us is that the poet has sublimated him into the Father of Law—the eternal, immutable upholder of Justice and Righteousness and Purity, with Apollo Pythius for his prophet—with all other deities as his symbolized functions or his symbolized ministers; that he has become πάνταρχος θεῶν, πανόπτας—the All-ruling Lord of Heaven, the all-seeing One, King of kings and Lord of lords, Aristotle's τὸ θεῖον περιέχον τὴν ὅλην φύσιν—the Divine Power containing the whole of nature.<sup>1</sup> Thus “the Gods” and “God” become synonymous: thus the polytheism of Sophocles becomes, if not nominally, at least practically monotheism; and a sublime and rational theology is formulated, the sublimest, the most rational, perhaps, which has ever taken form on earth, an ap-

<sup>1</sup> *Metaphysics*, xiv. 8.

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peal, not like that of mediaeval Christianity to the heart and the imagination, both untutored, nor like that of later paganism to the senses and the understanding, both hedonistic, but an appeal, as Matthew Arnold expresses it,<sup>1</sup> to the Imaginative Reason. Beneath—the dark labyrinth of human life; above—a Divinity just and holy, wise and watchful, who has written His law in man's heart and established its sanction in man's reason; who, the same yesterday to-day and for ever, grants no partial revelation of Himself to "a chosen people," that he may withdraw afterwards into clouds penetrable only by the eye of dogma-guided faith—but who has His witness in the perennial facts of life, so only they be seen in the light of purified intelligence; a God who bribes not nor threatens, but enlightens and dispenses, whose justice may not always be the justice of man—

But who never yet of human wrong  
Left the unbalanc'd scale.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Matthew Arnold's well known Essay on Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment.

<sup>2</sup> There can be no doubt at all that the religious creed of Sophocles differed in no essential respects from that of Shakespeare and Goethe. He no more believed in the objective existence of the Deities of his Pantheon than Shakespeare and Goethe, or indeed any of his own enlightened contemporaries did. Schiller's remark, in his *Ueber den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie* exactly expresses the attitude of Sophocles: "Unter der Hülle aller Religionen liegt die Religion selbst, die Idee eines Göttlichen, und es

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Thus the attitude of Sophocles towards the conventional creed, which finds its simplest expression in Theognis and its profoundest and most rational pre-Sophocleian interpreter in Aeschylus, was precisely similar to that of Wordsworth towards orthodox Christianity. With the deepest respect for it, and unconscious, perhaps, even in his own mind of scepticism, he yet, as a philosophical poet, instinctively ignored all that had not its foundation in universal truth or in rational probability. Nowhere is this seen more clearly in Sophocles than in his treatment of the doctrine of Necessity. That doctrine he was bound to accept, for it was inseparable from his material. But in many of the legends it was quite incompatible with any intelligible theory of the justice and righteousness of the Divine Power on the one hand, or with any intelligible law of human ethics on the other. He proceeded, therefore, to modify these legends. Keeping the element of Necessity as far as possible in the background, he shows how by a series of voluntary transgressions each sufferer works out his

muss dem Dichter erlaubt sein, dieses auszusprechen in welcher Form er es jedesmal am bequemsten und am treffendsten findet." For the exact attitude of the enlightened Greeks towards their mythology, and for their real religion, see Plato, *Laws*, bk. x. pp. 884-892. *Phaedrus*, p. 229. Xenophon, *Mem.* iv. 3, 16. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, xiv. 8. Plutarch, *De Audiendis Poetis*, *passim*. Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Epicurus*, ch. xxvii. For the whole question, Warburton's *Divine Legation*, vol. iii., sections i.-iii., and Cudworth, *Intellectual System*, book iv.

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own destruction, and, as a free agent, vindicates Destiny. Every one of his extant dramas, with the exception of the *Philoctetes*, illustrates this. Ajax pays the penalty for two acts of impious insolence and for one act of malignant treachery. Aegisthus and Clytemnestra pay the penalty for an atrocious crime followed by a long career of cruelty, impiety and tyranny. Antigone falls a victim to a suicidal act of audacious disobedience. Creon's arrogance and impiety in his treatment of Teiresias cost him wife and son. A base and cowardly murder, aggravated by the wanton destruction of an unoffending city and the gratification of passion under circumstances of peculiar selfishness and brutality, lead Hercules to his terrible fate. Even in the *Oedipus Rex*, a drama in which Necessity might at first sight seem to reign supreme, how carefully has the poet brought into prominence the ethical element. Jocasta, coarse, reckless, and impious, expiates by her death little more than her life had earned. In the character of Oedipus we discern almost as much intemperance as in Lear. In rage he murdered Laius; unjust charges brought in rage against Cleon and Teiresias hasten his downfall, and add to the burden of his subsequent remorse. "Thou hast done no good by indulging anger, which is ever thy bane,"<sup>1</sup> says Cleon to him. At the first sign of opposition he loses, like Lear, all control over himself. It was in passion, as he

<sup>1</sup> *Oedip. Col.*, 855.

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afterwards owned, that he trebled the calamities of his life by blinding himself. "When I began to feel that my wrath had run too far in punishing those past errors."<sup>1</sup> Nor is this all. In his impious boast that he had solved the sphinx's riddle without divine assistance; in his reckless insults against the prophet of Apollo and in his ready acquiescence in Jocasta's remark about the futility of oracles, we discern indications of darker traits. Even in the case of Philoctetes, "a righteous man among the righteous," we are not left without a key to the calamity which befell him. In violating the shrine of a goddess he was guilty of an offence which, though inadvertent, was inadvertency where inadvertency is sin. And that Sophocles substituted the legend, which attributes the wound of Philoctetes to the bite of Athena Chryse's serpent, for the common legend, is another proof of the care with which he traces calamity to the action of the sufferer. Haemon and Antigone perish rashly by their own hands, and, had those rash hands been stayed, been stayed for a few moments, all would have been well with each of them, as all was afterwards well with Imogen, because in her dark hour she was not deaf to the voice within :

Against self-slaughter  
There is a prohibition so divine  
That cravens my weak hand.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Id.*, 438-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Cymbeline*, iii. 4.



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And here we may pause for a moment to notice how exactly similar is the attitude of Sophocles and Shakespeare towards this crime. By neither of them has any glamour of sentiment been cast over it. In no case is it associated with magnanimity. In no case is it associated with honour, but in all cases with intemperance, or ignominy or with both. Jocasta and Dejanira, like Haemon, Eurydice, and Antigone, perish in frenzy. In the suicide of Ajax, the one instance in which Sophocles has represented suicide as a deliberate act, what impresses us throughout is the utter demoralization of the victim. *Θολερῶ χειμῶνι νοσήσας*, labouring at first in a turbid storm of frenzy, he regains self-mastery only to reduce to the dominion of a perverted will an anarchy of conflicting emotions—rage, shame, remorse, pity, grief, perishing desperately, a laughing stock to his foes, a source of sorrow and reproach to his friends. So perish Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, Brutus, Cassius, Titinius, Cleopatra, Antony, Enobarbus, Goneril, Othello, and, it would seem, Lady Macbeth. In none of these cases is self-destruction associated with anything but intemperance or retribution. "The foul'st best fits my latter part of life," exclaims Enobarbus; and it is remarkable that the poet should have put into the mouth of Brutus, the noblest of those who fall by their own hands in his tragedies, not merely a condemnation of the act generally, but a condemnation of the one suicide which tradition had universally glorified,

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and which even Dante appears to have excepted from the catalogue of crimes :

I did blame Cato for the death  
Which he did give himself; I know not how,  
But I do find it cowardly and vile,  
For fear of what might fall, so to prevent  
The time of life: arming myself with patience  
To stay the providence of some high powers  
That govern us below.<sup>1</sup>

Hamlet's remarks in his famous soliloquy will occur to every one, but still more striking are the words in which Gloucester expresses his thankfulness that he had been saved from such a crime.

You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me;  
Let not my worser spirit tempt me again  
To die before you please.<sup>2</sup>

But to return. Thus has Sophocles practically disentangled his theology from the old irrational fatalism. Thus, like Shakespeare, has he reconciled the law of Necessity with the law which is a lantern to the feet of men, resolving Destiny into the will of God.<sup>3</sup> Fully admitting the existence of an incalculable element, he yet sees, as clearly as Aristotle and Butler, that divine and human law alike postulate the free agency of man.

<sup>1</sup> *Julius Caesar*, v. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *King Lear*, iv. 6. See, too, what Gratiano says of Brabantio. *Othello*, v. 2.

<sup>3</sup> In Sophocles destiny is never represented as independent of, much less superior to, the will of Zeus.

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In his conception of the relation of crime to punishment, of sin and error to suffering and calamity, it is remarkable that Sophocles is much less pessimistic than Shakespeare. In Shakespeare, if we except *Measure for Measure*, for *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* are scarcely in the question, retribution is rarely tempered by mercy, justice is as ruthless as it is implacable. It is so in *Lear*, it is so in *Hamlet*, in *Romeo and Juliet*, in *Macbeth*, in *Coriolanus*, in *Othello*, in *Julius Caesar*. In Sophocles the balance is more equally adjusted. In the case, for example, of Oedipus, in the case of Antigone, in the case again of Philoctetes, the punishment, we feel, exceeded the offence; and all have compensation. Oedipus has compensation, in the final confidence of heaven's regard; in the certain knowledge that retribution will overtake his enemies; in the consciousness that, mighty in his grave, he will bring perpetual blessing on the land that sheltered him; and in a death, more glorious than had ever been conceded to a child of man, Antigone has compensation in the sublime consciousness of duty fulfilled, and in the conviction that justice and love were waiting to reward their martyr in the world beyond the grave. And how great is the recompense made to Philoctetes; for ten years of humiliation, a triumph without precedent in fame; for ten years of sordid suffering, an immortality of glory.

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But as in life, so also in these life's faithful transcripts, adversity has another aspect. If it presents itself, stern and terrible in the form of retribution as the scourge of Ate, it presents itself also in a benigner character, as the nurse of virtue and wisdom, as the discipliner of character. "Sweet are the uses of adversity" is the keynote of *As You Like It*, just as the words of Jupiter, "Whom best I love, I cross," finding their echo in the words of Lucius, "Some falls are meant the happier to arise," are the key to the afflictions of Imogen and Posthumus. "Are we," says Agamemnon in *Troilus and Cressida*, referring to the reverses of the Greeks—

To call them shames which are indeed nought else  
But the protractive trials of great Jove  
To find persistive constancy in men,  
The fineness of which metal is not found  
In fortune's love? <sup>1</sup>

In Oedipus the affliction that scourges, purifies and strengthens. In adversity Philoctetes learnt what the contemplation of human life had failed to teach him—that the gods are just, and that man's highest wisdom is submission, "obedient passions and a will resigned":

ἔα με πάσχειν ταῦθ' ἄπερ παθεῖν με δεῖ,<sup>2</sup>

(Let me endure what is appointed me),

he exclaims, just as Shakespeare's Posthumus cries—

<sup>1</sup> *Troilus and Cressida*, i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Philoctetes*, 1397.

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. . . . Gods!  
Do your best wills,  
And make me bless'd to obey.<sup>1</sup>

In the school of affliction was moulded, as Sophocles has been careful to show us, the one perfect character he has painted, a character which seems to me to stand alone in fiction, the ideal for all time of the perfect gentleman, a companion portrait to Shakespeare's Henry V, but of infinitely finer temper,—the Theseus of the *Oedipus Coloneus*. "Dire indeed must be the fortune," he says to Oedipus, "told by thee to me from which I should stand aloof, who know that I myself also was reared in exile like to thine, and in strange lands wrestled with perils to my life, as no man beside. Never then would I turn away from a stranger, or refuse to aid in his deliverance; for well I know that I am a man, and that in the morrow my portion is no greater than thine."<sup>2</sup>

But adversity has other associations. No poet can paint life in its integrity who does not recognize that most tragical of all its conditions, the suffering which, befalling the guiltless, cannot be penal, and which, as it involves their extinction, cannot be purgative. Of this dreadful paradox, we have only one illustration in Sophocles—it is the case of Dejanira—and there is surely nothing in fiction which

<sup>1</sup> *Cymbeline*, v. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Oedip. Col.*, 560-8.

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surpasses this picture in pathos. The flawed heart of Ophelia burst smilingly; with Cordelia the pang was brief; the agony of Othello and Desdemona, not protracted, had compensation in past joy. But on Dejanira, a woman without fault, true as Imogen, pitiful as Cordelia, meek as Desdemona, noble as Isabel, fortune had never smiled. From her bridal day to the day on which, cursed by her own child, the innocent murderess of the husband on whom she doted she drove in frenzy the sword into her side, her spotless life had been one long martyrdom.

From anomalies like these, and they are of course constantly occurring, variously modified, in the drama of human life, Sophocles and Shakespeare appear to draw the same conclusions. They are to be accepted, not as indicating the suspension or the disturbance of the Moral Law, still less as indicating the work of blind chance. But they are illustrations of a principle which finds its most obvious analogy in the physical world. The justice of heaven resembles, as a rule, the justice of man, and he who suffers is he who sins. But as no law is written more legibly on the natural world than the law that its economy, once disturbed, ruin shall know no distinction, so no law is written more legibly on the moral world than the law that, if error and crime are particular, retribution shall be general; that if the innocent be

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associated with the guilty both perish together.<sup>1</sup> Ophelia suffered for the faults of Hamlet, Cordelia for the intemperance of Lear. When Dejanira linked her life with Hercules in his conduct she found her fate. By *his* sin she erred, through *his* sin she suffered. And so it has always been,—an anomaly filling man with perplexity and despair, so long as viewing life in part, he judges in part, but an anomaly which is no anomaly to seers who preceding, like Sophocles, or resisting, like Shakespeare, the individualizing theory of Christianity, ‘see life steadily, and see it whole.’ That the spectacle of the afflictions and miseries of mankind, whether springing from the law of retribution or from the malignity of fortune, from the limitations of the soul or from infirmities inherent in the flesh, disturbed, at times, and saddened both these poets is probable enough. It was thus that Shakespeare put into the mouth of one of the profoundest of his philosophers the words we know so well—

Reason thus with life:  
If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing  
That none but fools would keep.<sup>2</sup>

It was thus that Sophocles put into the mouth of his Attic elders—

<sup>1</sup> It is from this fact that Aeschylus represents Eteocles finding comfort, when he is told that the god-fearing Amphiarus is in the ranks of the six impious chiefs. See *Sept. cont. Theb.*, 593-604.

<sup>2</sup> *Measure for Measure*, iii. 1.

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μη φῦναι τὸν ἅπαντα νικᾶ λόγον· τὸ δ' ἐπεὶ φανῆ,  
βῆναι κείθεν ὄθεν περ ἔκει, πολὺ δεύτερον, ὡς τάχιστα.

(“Not to be born is past all prizing best, but when a man hath seen the light this is next best by far, that with all speed he should go thither to (the nothing) whence he has come.<sup>1</sup>)

But the spectacle, which disturbed and saddened, never clouded their vision, never yet has clouded the vision of the seers of truth, from the day when its Spirit proclaimed by the lips of the great Hebrew prophet: “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good,” to this latter day when it finds a voice in the verse of our own poet—

And all is well, though faith and form  
Be sundered in the night of fear ;  
Well roars the storm to those that hear  
A deeper voice across the storm.

But if the reverence and wisdom of both poets express themselves in a theodicy which reconciles and explains so much, they also express themselves in a profound sense of the impotence of human reason and of human insight to “search into the counsels of gods” or to solve the mystery of life’s anomalies. This is seen in the uncertainty in which they both leave such questions as the immortality of the soul, the existence of a future state and the relation of the fortunes of individuals to the Moral Law in its application to individuals.

<sup>1</sup> *Oedip. Col.*, 1225-6.



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As to the first and second of these problems it is quite impossible to say on which side the balance of probability really inclines in either poet. On a superficial view it would seem that Shakespeare leans decidedly to the negative, Sophocles as decidedly to the affirmative. But this is simply because mythology and mythological tradition enter more essentially into the machinery of his plots, and because of the intimacy of his connexion as a dramatist with the state religion. In one or two cases indeed he has so modified or handled the legends on which his drama is based that he has practically ignored all such considerations, even where they are implicit in the myth. It is so with the *Ajax*, the catastrophe of which is entirely independent of any posthumous association; it is so with the *Trachiniae*, in which there is no reference to the apotheosis of Hercules. The fate of Oedipus is shrouded in mystery. In the chorus preceding the catastrophe of the *Oedipus Coloneus*, Hades is invoked as the luller in eternal sleep (σέ τοι κικλήσκω τὸν αἰενυπτόν). In innumerable passages death is simply regarded as an escape from the evils, sufferings and inconveniences of life—in the poet's own phrase, the physician of life's evils. As the Chorus in the *Ajax* says, κρείσσων γὰρ Αἶδα κεύθων ἢ νοσῶν μάταν.

In fragment 515 it is distinctly said that when a man is once dead he is dead for ever.

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βιοτῆς μὲν γὰρ χρόνος ἔστι βραχὺς·  
κρυφθεὶς δ' ὑπὸ γῆς κείται θνητὸς  
τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον

(Brief is life's span, but when once in his grave man is dead for ever),

which may be compared with Shakespeare's conceit, "Death once dead there's no more dying then."<sup>1</sup> But in Fragment 753, a reference no doubt to the Orphic mysteries, there is a curious modification of this opinion. "Thrice happy," it says, "are those men who after witnessing these rites go to Hades; for there these alone have life, but there for all others there is every kind of evil."<sup>2</sup> While in Fragment 760 absolute uncertainty as to what succeeds death is expressed: "Are you bemoaning a dead man because he has perished, though you know nothing of the future whether it brings gain or not?"<sup>3</sup> In the *Antigone*, and in the *Antigone* alone, is strong stress laid on the relation between life here and a life beyond the grave, but this is expressed not by the Chorus but by the maiden enthusiast herself. In the *Electra*, emphatic though the language is, the living dead may easily be resolved into symbols of those to whom the living owe duties."<sup>4</sup> All

<sup>1</sup> Sonnet cxlvi.

<sup>2</sup> ὡς τρίς ὀλβιοὶ  
κένοι βροτῶν, οἳ ταῦτα δερχθέντες τέλη  
μύλωσ' ἐς "Αἴδου· τοῖσδε γὰρ μόνοις ἐκεῖ  
ζῆν ἔστι, τοῖς δ' ἄλλοισι πάντ' ἐκεῖ κακά.

<sup>3</sup> σὺ δ' ἄνδρα θνητὸν, εἰ κατεφθέτο, στένεις  
εἰδῶς τὸ μέλλον οὐδὲν εἶ κέρδος φέρει;

<sup>4</sup> *Elect.*, 1419-21, Ζῶσιον οἱ γὰρ ὑπαὶ κείμενοι, etc.

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this illustrates, as passages embodying similar inconsistencies which could be culled from Shakespeare illustrate, the wise abstinence on the part of both poets from dogmatizing on subjects beyond the ken of human reason and human insight.

On the mystery of suffering and on the dispensation of rewards and punishments there is the same tacit confession of the impossibility of always reconciling the dispensations of Heaven with man's notions of justice and right. To both poets there was much in life and in the ways of God with men which presented insoluble problems. On this subject there is a very remarkable passage in Sophocles, it is one of the Fragments from uncertain dramas.<sup>1</sup>

καὶ τὸν θεὸν τοιοῦτον ἐξεπίσταμαι  
σοφοῖς μὲν αἰνικτῆρα θεσφάτων ἀεὶ,  
σκαιοῖς δὲ φαῦλον κἂν βραχεῖ διδάσκαλον.

(And as for the Deity I know that this is His character: to the wise he is ever a framer of riddling oracles, to fools an easy and brief teacher.)

Perverse, or superficial indeed, must be the study which deduces pessimism from the theodicy of either Sophocles or Shakespeare.

“Thou dost not well”: let us turn to the beautiful chorus in the *Trachiniae*—

φᾶμι γὰρ οὐκ ἀποτρέπειν  
ἐλπίδα τὰν ἀγαθὰν  
χρῆναι σ' ἀνάληγτα γὰρ οὐδ' ὅ πάντα χραίων βασιλεὺς

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<sup>1</sup> Fragment, 701.

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ἐπέβαλε θνατοῖς Κρονίδας. ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πῆμα καὶ χαρὰ  
πᾶσι κυκλῶσιν, οἷον ἄρκτου στροφάδες κέλευθοι.  
μένει γὰρ οὐτ' αἰόλα  
νῦξ βροτοῖσιν οὔτε κῆρες οὔτε πλοῦτος,  
ἀλλ' ἄφαρ βέβακε· τῷ δ' ἐπέρχεται χαίρειν τε καὶ στέρεσθαι.  
ἄ καὶ σε τὰν ἀνασσαν ἐλπίσιν λέγω  
τάδ' αἰὲν ἴσχειν· ἐπεὶ τίς ᾧδε  
τέκνοισιν Ζῆν' ἄβουλον εἶδεν;

(*Trachiniae*, 124-40.)

("Thou dost not well, I say, to kill bright hope by fretting; for he that ruleth all, great Chronos' son, did not enjoin on man a painless lot; but sorrow and joy, like the Bear's twisting paths, come round to all. There abideth not with men either starry night, or woes, or wealth, but straight-way each is gone; then on another comes gladness and loss. Therefore I would bid thee, who art his queen, keep all this in prospect; for who hath ever seen Zeus improvident for his children.")

If Shakespeare gave us *Lear* and *Othello*, and Sophocles, the *Ajax*, and the *Oedipus Rex*, let us not forget that the last legacy, may we say the maturest expression of the one was *Cymbeline* and the *Tempest*, of the other the *Philoctetes* and the *Oedipus Coloneus*, vindications not of the divine justice only but of the divine benevolence.

As in Shakespeare, so in Sophocles, man's monitor is the law, and man's duty of duties is submission. Like Shakespeare, he sees in the law of subordination which maintains the harmony of states, the reflection of that law of subordination which maintains the harmony of nature.

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ὑπεικτέον· τί μὴν ;  
καὶ γὰρ τὰ δεινὰ καὶ τὰ καρτερώτατα  
τιμαῖς ὑπείκει. τοῦτο μὲν νιφοστιβεῖς  
χειμῶνες ἐκχωροῦσιν εὐκάρπῳ θέρεϊ·  
ἐξίσταται δὲ νυκτὸς αἰανῆς κύκλος  
τῇ λευκῶλῳ φέγγος ἡμέρα φλέγειν·  
δεινῶν τ' ἄημα πνευμάτων ἐκοίμισε  
στένοντα πόντον. . . . .

ἡμεῖς δὲ πῶς οὐ γνωσόμεσθα σωφρονέων.

(*Ajax*, 688-77.)

("We must submit, ay, surely: for dread things and things of mightiest power bow to authority; thus it is that the snow-strewn winters give place to summer rich with fruit, and thus night's dreary round makes place to let shine out with her bright steeds the day; and the blast of terrible winds at length gives slumber to the groaning sea. . . . . And we, shall we not learn wisdom?")

Thus, too, Menelaus—

*Ιλ.*, καίτοι κακοῦ πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἀνδρα δημότην  
μηδὲν δικαιοῦν τῶν ἐφεστῶτων κλύειν·  
οὐ γὰρ ποτ' οὔτ' ἂν ἐν πόλει νόμοι καλῶς  
φέρουτ' ἂν, ἔνθα μὴ καθεστήκη δέος·  
οὔτ' ἂν στρατὸς γε σωφρόνως ἄρχοιτ' ἔτι  
μηδὲν φόβου πρόβλημα μηδ' αἰδοῦς ἔχων·

δέος γὰρ ὡς πρόσσεστιν αἰσχύνῃ θ' ὁμοῦ,  
σωτηρίαν ἔχοντα τὸν δ' ἐπίστασο  
ὑπου δ' ὑβρίζειν δρᾶν θ' ἄβούλεται παρῆ  
ταύτην νόμιζε τὴν πόλιν χρόνῳ ποτὲ  
ἐξ οὐρίων δραμοῦσαν εἰς βυθὸν πεσεῖν. (1071-83.)

("Tis the sign of a base man that a private citizen disdains to listen to those who are set over him. For never can the laws thrive and hold their course in a city where awe is not established, nor could a host continue to be wisely ruled if it had not the defence of fear and reverence. . . . Be sure that the man who has fear and shame is safe. But where insolence and wild will have licence, be assured that such a state, though she has run before favouring gales, will one day sink into the abyss.)

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“And,” he continues, “let us not think that if we do what pleases us we shall not in turn have to pay the penalty in what pains.”<sup>1</sup>

As sternly hostile as Shakespeare himself to the anarchy of democracy, it is in reverence and obedience, unquestioning and implicit on the part of the many, that he discerns the only security for states, the only salvation for individuals.

ὅστις δ' ὑπερβὰς ἢ νόμους βιάζεται,  
ἢ τοῦπιτάσσειν τοῖς κρατύνουσιν νοεῖ,  
οὐκ ἔστ' ἐπαίνου τοῦτον ἐξ ἐμοῦ τυχεῖν.  
ἀλλ' ὄν πόλις στήσειε, τοῦδε χρὴ κλύειν  
καὶ σμικρὰ, καὶ δίκαια, καὶ τάναντια.

ἀναρχίας γὰρ μείζον οὐκ ἔστιν κακόν,  
αὕτη πόλεις θλλυσι, ἢ δ' ἀναστάτους  
οἴκους τίθησι, ἢ δε σὺν μάχῃ δορὸς  
τροπὰς καταβρῆγνυσι. τῶν δ' ὀρθουμένων  
σώζει τὰ πολλὰ σώμαθ' ἢ πειθαρχία.

(*Antig.* 667-668.)

(No praise from me shall that man ever have who, transgressing, either outrages the law, or takes upon him to instruct his rulers. Whoe'er the state sets up must be obeyed, in little and in much, in right and wrong. The worst of ills is disobedience. By this are cities ruined; this breaks up the home; and this, the spear's ally in fight, shatters in flight the wavering ranks, but the many lives of prosperous course owe their salvation to obedience.)

In conclusion, what constitutes the distinction between these poets as teachers is this; that while arriving practically at the same conclusions both with regard to life and with regard to man, Shakespeare contemplates man rather in

<sup>1</sup> καὶ μὴ δοκῶμεν δρῶντες ἄν ἠδῶμεθα  
οὐκ ἀντιτείσσειν αὐθις ἄν λυπώμεθα.

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relation to himself, to duty and to society than in relation to the Unseen. It is always in relation to the Unseen and the Divine, and only secondarily in relation to himself and his surroundings that he is contemplated by Sophocles. Thus the one subordinates theology to ethics, and the other subordinates ethics to theology. In the theodicy of both the fabric of nature and life rests on a divine foundation. In Shakespeare this foundation is not always discernible. In Sophocles it is never at any moment concealed. It is as a dramatic poet and a dramatic poet only that Shakespeare deals with life; he is a moralist and theosophist indirectly and by virtue of the subtlety, profundity, and comprehensiveness of his dramatic insight. But Sophocles is pre-eminently a religious poet. Appealing directly and appealing habitually to the religious instinct in man he shows him how delusive are the senses, how delusive is the reason, how powerless are both to strip the veil off the fallacious irony of life, to expose the wisdom which is no wisdom, the strength which is no strength, the prosperity which is failure. Of all poets Sophocles is perhaps the most entitled to the epithet divine. The perfect harmony of his exquisitely balanced powers, the serene and luminous intelligence which is the atmosphere in which his genius moves, his lofty transcendentalism, the steadiness and clearness

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with which he discerns through obscuring accidents the Real and the True, and through change and change, the Unchanging and Eternal—most of these characteristics he shares with Shakespeare. But his transcendentalism is his own, his own the glory of consecrating action by linking it not merely with morality and prudence, but with the sacramental virtues of purity, holiness, and piety. The difference between the two poets in their attitude towards man and life finds perhaps its clearest and most striking illustration in the turn which precept and exhortation take in directly didactic passages. Such, for example, in Shakespeare would be Polonius' advice to Laertes, in *Hamlet*; the Countess' advice to Bertram, in *All's Well that Ends Well*; the Friar's speech to Romeo, in *Romeo and Juliet*; the Duke's to Claudio, in *Measure for Measure*; Henry IV's to Prince Hal, in *Henry IV.*; Henry's to the conspirators, in *Henry V.*; and Wolsey's to Cromwell, in *Henry VIII.* Place beside any of them the Chorus of which Matthew Arnold said with unwonted rapture, "let St. Francis, nay, or rather Luther either, beat that!"

εἶ μοι ξυνεῖη φέροντι  
 μοῖρα τὰν εὐσεπτον ἀγγελίαν λόγων  
 ἔργων τε πάντων, ὧν νόμοι πρόκεινται  
 ὑψίποδες, οὐρανίαν  
 δι' αἰθέρα τεκνωθέντες, ὧν Ὀλυμπος  
 πατήρ μόνος, οὐδέ νιν  
 θνάτα φύσις ἀνέρων



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ἔτικτεν, οὐδὲ μὲν ποτὲ λάθρα κατακοιμάσει  
μέγας ἐν τούτοις θεός, οὐδὲ γηράσκει.

(*Oed. Rex*, 863-71.)

(May it be my lot to win the prize of hallowed purity in every deed and word that hath the sanction of the lofty laws, whose father is Heaven itself, and as they were the offspring of no mortal race of men so neither shall oblivion ever lull them into sleep: a mighty god is in them and he waxeth not old.)

But see the whole of this sublime chorus.

Or take the dialogue between Athene and Ulysses<sup>1</sup> when they are gazing on the frenzy-blasted child of insolence—

*Athene.* Seest thou, Ulysses, how great is the power of the gods? Couldst thou have found any man of more prudence or more valiant in serving the season than this one?

*Ulysses.* None know I; and yet enemy though he be, I pity him, bound down as he has been to a dreadful doom, in this regarding not more his lot than mine own. For I see that we be but phantoms and fleeting shadow—we all of us that live.

*Athene.* Beholding such things, then, see that thou dost not thyself speak any proud word against the gods; or take on thee pomp, if thou excellest another in strength of hand, or depth of teeming wealth: for all that is man's a day casts down and a day raiseth up; the gods love the sober, and the wicked they hate.

And thus in these two poets has poetry made, in Arnold's words, "the noblest, the most successful effort she has ever made as the priestess of the imaginative reason, of the element by which the modern spirit, if it would live aright, has chiefly to live."

<sup>1</sup> *Ajax*, 118-133.

## IV

### SHAKESPEARE AS A PROSE WRITER

**I**T is related of Lord Mansfield, one of the profoundest and acutest lawyers who ever sat on the English bench, that he found himself very much impeded in his early career at the Bar by the reputation which he had acquired for polite learning. A young man who associated with Pope, supped at the Grecian, and could turn an Ode of Horace, was obviously quite incompetent to wrestle with the technicalities of Coke. It was in vain that he showed convincing proofs of the range and accuracy of his legal attainments. It was in vain that he surrounded himself with the ponderous tomes of Glanvil and Bracton. His plodding brethren would not believe him. They shook their heads at him "as a wit." They could conceive of no alliance between Themis and the Muses—between the idealism of poetry and the plain prose of the law. A fate somewhat similar seems to have befallen our great national poet.

We have so long regarded Shakespeare as a writer of verse, that it seems never to have struck any of his myriad commentators to contemplate him as a writer of prose. During the

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last century and a half his works have been studied from almost every point of view. Eminent theologians have discussed his theology; eminent lawyers have discussed his legal acquirements; physicians have illustrated his knowledge of the phenomena of disease; scholars have estimated his obligations to Greece and Rome; psychologists and metaphysicians have been busy with his philosophy; historians with his history, and philologists with his language. But from the appearance of Rowe's biography of him in 1709 to the appearance of Professor Boas' monograph on him last year, and from the days of Lessing to the days of Gervinus and Delius in Germany, we cannot call to mind a single attempt to estimate his position and merit as a writer of prose. Delius has indeed dealt at some length with this portion of Shakespeare's work, but his essay is almost entirely confined to an examination of the text itself.<sup>1</sup> His criticism is not comparative, and he has therefore failed to realize the great services which Shakespeare rendered to English prose. He has not shown in what points his prose essentially differs from that of contemporary writers. He has not traced with sufficient minuteness the history of its development in the great dramatist's hands.

<sup>1</sup> *Die Prosa in Shakspeare's Dramen*, in his *Abhandlungen zu Shakspeare*, pp. 152-205.

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He has not distinguished with sufficient precision its various styles.

The truth is that Shakespeare's prose is a phenomenon as remarkable as his verse. In one way, indeed, it is still more remarkable. The prose of Shakespeare stands alone. It was his own creation, as absolutely his own as the terza rima was Dante's, as the Spenserian stanza was Spenser's. For every other form of composition he had models which he began by following very exactly. English blank verse had been all but perfected in some of its phases by Marlowe and Peele, in others by Kyd and the authors of *Arden of Feversham* and the *Warning for Fair Women*, before it passed into his hands. That he added much to it is true. He varied the pauses; he made it at once more flexible and more massive, more perfectly adapted to catch, with exquisite subtlety, the ever-changing phases of thought, what the Greeks call more ἡθικόν, more fitted for the expression of character. To the rhymed heroic couplet he added nothing; to the sonnet he added nothing. His lyrics, matchless as they are, differ in nothing so far as form, tone and style are concerned, from the lyrics of his immediate predecessors. But his prose is essentially original; and how greatly he contributed to the development of this important branch of rhetoric will be at once apparent if we compare his prose diction with the diction

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both of those who preceded and of those who followed him.

The two greatest masters of prose in the period preceding the literary activity of Hooker were Tyndale and Cranmer, who created the style which found expression in the successive translations of the Bible and in the Liturgy, a matchless combination of simplicity and dignity, of fluidity and stateliness. But it was a style studiously tempered to the sublime and solemn purposes to which it was dedicated. It remained as a style quite apart ; in some respects it coloured and affected the diction of secular literature, but it never became characteristic of that literature. Next came Latimer, racy, colloquial, idiomatic, vigorous, and at times rising to impressive fervour, but without the note of distinction. Hooker carried to perfection a style which remains to this day unexcelled in massive and majestic eloquence, and which shows more fully perhaps than any other composition in our language, how nearly English prose can become the counterpart of the style most characteristic of Cicero when Cicero is at his best. The diffuse, involved and Italian periods of Sidney, Puttenham and Greene, if they illustrated the plasticity and copiousness of our language, are far less successful experiments in synthetic prose, while the coarse colloquial vulgarity of writers like Nashe and Harvey, and the authors of the *Martin Marprelate* tracts, scarcely marked much pro-

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gress in prose on another side. It is undoubtedly in the prose dialogue of Greene, Peele, and pre-eminently of Lyly that we find the embryo out of which Shakespeare's prose was developed. In his earlier style Lyly, both as the author of *Euphues* and as the author of the Comedies which go under his name, was undoubtedly his model and his master; and the history of the evolution of his prose must, critically speaking, start from this point. But he soon left his master, and as early as 1593, if the influence of his dramatic predecessors is, as it certainly is, discernible, it is discernible in the way in which he blends and, while blending, perfects every note caught from them. After that date all influence from, and all imitations of, his predecessors practically cease.

What, then, did Shakespeare do for English prose? He was the creator of colloquial prose, of the prose most appropriate for drama. He showed for the first time how that prose could be dignified without being pedantic; how it could be full and massive without subordinating the Saxon to the Latin element; how it could be stately without being involved; how it could be musical, without borrowing its rhythm and its cadence from the rhetoricians of Rome. He made it plastic. He taught it to assume, and to assume with propriety, every tone. He showed its capacity for dialectics, for exposition, for narrative, for soliloquy. He purified it from

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archaisms. Indeed, his diction often differs little from that of the best writers in the eighteenth century. The following passage, for example, will, in point of purity, rhythm, and composition, bear comparison with any paragraph in Addison :—

First, my feare ; then, my curtsie, last, my speech. My feare is your displeasure ; my curtsie, my dutie ; and my speech, to begge your pardons. If you looke for a good speech you undoe me, for what I have to say is of my own making, and what indeed I should say, will, I doubt, proove my own marring. But to the purpose, and so to the venture. Be it knowne to you, as it is very well, I was lately heere in the end of a displeasing Play to pray your patience for it, and to promise you a better. . . . Here I promised you I would be, and here I commit my bodie to your mercies. Bate me some, and I will pay you some, and, as most debtors do, promise you infinitely. If my tongue cannot entreat you to acquit me, will you command me to use my legges? And yet that were but light payment,—to dance out of your debt. But a good conscience would make any possible satisfaction, and so must I.

(Epilogue to 2 *Henry IV.*)

And how perfect is the following :—

Marry, then, sweet Wagge, when thou art king let not us that are squires of the Nights Bodie bee call'd Theeves of the Dayes beautie. Let us be Dianaes Forresters, Gentlemen of the Shade, Minions of the Moone, and let men say, we be men of good government, being governed as the Sea is by our noble and chast Mistris the Moone, under whose countenance we steale.

(1 *Henry IV.*, i. 2.)

In light and fleering dialogue he is not inferior

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to Vanbrugh and Farquhar. In point and terseness he is not inferior to Congreve. Indeed, it is easy to see that Congreve frequently modelled his prose dialogue on that of Shakespeare. A more magnificent piece of rhetoric than Hamlet's reflections on man was never penned either by Milton, Taylor, or Sir Thomas Browne. A finer specimen of grave and logical disquisition than the dialogue between Bates, Williams, and the King in the fourth act of *Henry V.* it would not be easy to find in the whole range of our prose literature. The dialogues between Rosalind and Celia; between Rosalind and Orlando, and between Corin and Touchstone, in *As You Like It*; between Benedict and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, bear the same relation to our prose drama as the dialogues of Molière bear to the dramatic prose of France. The speech of Brutus (*Julius Caesar*, act ii. sc. 2); the two monologues of Iago (*Othello*, act i. sc. 3); of Henry V (*Henry V.*, act iv. sc. 1); the soliloquy of Edmund (*Lear*, act i. sc. 2); of Hamlet (*Hamlet*, act ii. sc. 2, and again act v. sc. 1); the speech of Speed (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, act ii. sc. 1), are, regarded merely as compositions, masterpieces. The only dramatist who could for one instant stand comparison with Shakespeare as a prose writer would be Ben Jonson; but Ben Jonson's best is far inferior to Shakespeare's best. Jonson's most ambitious prose is cast in a Latin mould. His dedication,



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for example, of *The Fox* to the two Universities is infinitely more Latin than English; the prose of his *Discoveries* is no advance on that of Sidney; and his dialogue, even at its highest, is seldom free from stiffness and pedantry. In a word, Shakespeare carried prose composition further than any writer during the Elizabethan age, I am speaking of course of the extent and variety of his powers of expression. In the comparative infancy of our prose literature, he achieved one of the rarest triumphs of its maturity—the union of the graces of rhetoric with the graces of colloquy. He attempted several styles, he excelled in all. Since his time many eminent poets have distinguished themselves in prose composition. At and before his time, such a double triumph was unique; for who could compare the *Vita Nuova* with the *Paradiso*, the *Tale of Melibeus* with the *Knight's Tale*, or the *Dialogue on the State of Ireland* with a canto of the *Faery Queen*? Nor is this all. He was the first of our writers who perceived that the mechanism of prose differs essentially from the mechanism of verse, and who discerned how far the laws which govern the rhythm and cadence of metre might, without confusing the lines of demarcation between the two modes of expression, operate beneficially on the rhythm and cadence of prose.

In examining Shakespeare's prose more particularly it is possible to discern five distinct

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styles. First will come the euphuistic ; secondly, the coarse colloquial prose, modelled on the language of vulgar life ; thirdly, the prose of higher comedy ; fourthly, prose professedly rhetorical ; and lastly, highly wrought poetical prose.

The style which Lyly had, both by his celebrated romance and also by his comedies, made popular—a style which was almost universally affected by the court circles, and which continued to be popular till it received its death-blow from Sir Philip Sidney—has left considerable traces on Shakespeare's diction. Euphuism is employed, sometimes seriously and sometimes satirically. Some of the dialogue in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*,<sup>1</sup> in *As You Like It*,<sup>2</sup> and in the *Winter's Tale*, offers obvious illustrations of the first, though we may observe how the poet's tact and taste has led him to soften down the glaring extravagance of his model. His wit has all the flavour of Lyly's, but, unlike Lyly's, it is seldom forced ; with all the point and epigram of his model, he has little of his false imagery, none of his frigid puerilities. A very good specimen of this modified euphuism is to be found in the second scene of the fifth act of the *Winter's Tale*. Who does not recognize the genuine Lyly in such a sentence as "There might you have

<sup>1</sup> Act ii. sc. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Act iii. sc. 1 and 2 ; iv. 1, and the epilogue.

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beheld one joy crown another, so and in such manner that it seemed sorrow wept to take leave of them, for their joy waded in tears"; or again in "one of the prettiest touches of all, *and that which angled for mine eyes caught the water though not the fish, was,*" etc.? The style of many of the speeches of Falstaff closely recalls the style of Lyly<sup>1</sup> in their antithesis and point as well as in their rhythm,<sup>2</sup> and in the epilogue we have the same note. Again, many of the speeches of Rosalind and Portia owe much to the same model. We trace it also unmistakably in Iago's speech:—

"Vertue? a figge! 'tis in ourselves that we are thus and thus. Our bodies are our gardens: to the which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles or sowe lettice, set Hisope or weede up Time, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many, either to have it sterrill with idleness or manured with industry; why, the power and corrigible authoritie of this lies in our wills. If the braine of our lives had not one scale of reason to poize another of sensualitie, the blood and basenesse of our natures would conduct us to the most preposterous conclusions. But we have reason to coole our raging motions, our carnall stings, our unbitted lusts; wherefore I take this that you call love, to be a sect or scyon."<sup>3</sup>

His satirical parodies of Lyly are to be found, not so much in entire scenes and dialogues, as

<sup>1</sup> Act i. sc. 1; v. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See particularly 1 *Henry IV.*, ii. 5, and *Ibid.*, v. 1, the soliloquy on honour.

<sup>3</sup> *Othello*, i. 3.

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in particular passages—though *Love's Labour's Lost* is, from beginning to end, one mass of euphuism. An exhaustive catalogue of the characteristics of euphuism might, indeed, be compiled from this single play. Don Adriano de Armado is a euphuist of the first water, and so also, in their way, are Moth and Holofernes. Again, Osric, in *Hamlet*, is evidently intended to ridicule Lyly's young gentlemen. The speeches of Falstaff and Henry when they are acting the King (*Henry IV.*, part i. act ii. sc. 5) are obviously in the same vein. "For though camomile the more it is trodden on the faster it grows, yet youth the more it is wasted the sooner it wears," sounds like an extract taken verbatim from *The Anatomy of Wit*. Shakespeare's satirical parodies proved that he fully recognized the puerility of euphuism, and where he directly imitates it he imitates it, generally speaking, for the purpose of laughing at it.<sup>1</sup>

We now come to the second of the five divisions—the realistic colloquial prose, modelled on the language of common life. This is the language of the clowns, of the fools, of the citizens, officers, and of all the baser characters; the language of Jack Cade, of Touchstone,

<sup>1</sup> For Shakespeare and Euphuism, see Mr. Warwick Bond's monumental edition of Lyly's Works, vol. i. pp. 149-53, but I cannot agree with his remark that in the prose of Shakespeare's earlier works there are no traces of Lyly's influence.

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of Launce, of Bottom, of Bardolph, of Mrs. Quickly, of Thersites, of Dogberry, of Trinculo, of Stephano, of Cloten, and of the rabble when the rabble are brought on the stage. It is, as a rule, studiously garnished with slang and proverbs. It will admit of many varieties, as it is the expression of many moods and the instrument of many different characters. Sometimes it is made the vehicle of such jargon as that in which Dr. Caius, Fluellen, or Evans express themselves, or of the broken English of Catharine. Sometimes it embodies the ribald invectives and licentious facetiousness usual in the wit combats between the Prince and Falstaff, and is seen to perfection in the pot-house scenes in *Henry IV.*, or in Kent's onslaught on the Steward in *Lear*. Sometimes it is a mere transcript from the diction of ordinary life, as in that wonderfully realistic scene in which Silence and Shallow meet (*Henry IV.*, part ii. act iii. sc. 2), or in the scene between Henry V and Catharine (*Henry V.*, act v. sc. 3), or in the Jack Cade scenes in 2 *Henry IV.*, or in the opening scene of *Julius Caesar*, and the rabble scenes in *Coriolanus*. At other times it expresses the comments and grievances of good Mrs. Quickly; or the incisive common sense of Michael Williams and Menenius; or the grotesque communings of Launce; or the bustling ambition of Bottom and his crew; at other times it rises to

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a sort of rhythmic dignity, as in some of the soliloquies of Falstaff, and occasionally in the speeches of Autolycus ; but whatever phase it assumes, it is always the exact unidealised speech of the people. The dramatists who preceded Shakespeare, notably Marlowe, Greene and Peele, had indeed employed it, but in their hands, except where it is mere fluent scurrility, it is usually struggling with that kind of awkwardness incident to a style which is partly literary, and partly studying to be dramatically appropriate. The prose scenes, for example, in Marlowe's *Faust* and *Jew of Malta*, in Greene's and Lodge's *Looking Glass for London*, and in Peele's *Old Wives' Tale*, cannot for an instant be compared to Shakespeare in point of style. He is as much superior to them in power of colloquial expression as he is superior in creative genius. We must go forward more than half a century to Bunyan, before we shall find any author who displays such perfect command over the speech of the vulgar, and who can reproduce it with such exactness. Nor need any exception be made in favour of Dekker, Heywood, Middleton, or any of the representatives of the Plebeian school. They have, it is true, great skill in the conduct of homely dialogue, but it is 'not the skill of Shakespeare.

We now come to a kindred but a different style—the prose, that is to say, of the higher comedy ; and this is a style of which Shakespeare

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was the absolute and immortal creator, a style in which he has never been surpassed. This is the diction of his ladies and gentlemen, when they do not express themselves in rhyme or in blank verse. Though it is occasionally marred by the coarseness which was, in the days of Elizabeth or James, not merely venial but habitual, it is as a rule essentially refined. Its coarseness never degenerates into vulgarity. Its tone and spirit are those of an aristocratic society. It is generally polished and graceful. It abounds in wit and epigram. When it rises, it is never stilted; when it sinks, it is never mean. It reflects every shade and every tone of thought with exact fidelity. As the vehicle of light and playful irony it is eminently happy. Its persiflage is not inferior to the best which can be found in Molière or De Musset. Its rhythm is sometimes so musical, its cadences are so exquisitely modulated, that it may be fairly questioned whether the most finished paragraphs in Addison could, in point of composition, be pronounced superior to it. Let us illustrate our meaning:—

*Jacques.* I have neither the scholler's melancholy which is emulation, nor the musitian's which is fantastical, nor the courtier's which is proud, nor the souldier's which is ambitious, nor the lawyer's which is politick, nor the ladie's which is nice, nor the lover's which is all these. But it is a melancholy of my owne, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and, indeed, the sundrie contemplation of my travells, in

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which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness.

*Rosalind.* A traveller ! By my faith, you have great reason to be sad. I feare you have sold your land to see other men's : then to have seene much and to have nothing, is to have rich eyes and poor hands.<sup>1</sup>

What could be more perfect than the *lexis* and the rhythm of this passage? It is a piece of prose without a flaw, from whatever point of view it may be examined, whether we regard the arrangement of the words, the evolution of the sentences, the pauses, the cadence of the final sentence, the harmony of the whole paragraph. Or take the following :—

*Orlando.* For ever and a day.

*Rosalind.* Say a day without the ever : no, no, Orlando, men are Aprill when they woo, December when they wed. Maides are May when they are maides, but the sky changes when they are wives. I will bee more jealous of thee than a Barbary cocke-pidgeon over his hen ; more clamorous then a Parrat against raine ; more new-fangled then an ape ; more giddy in my desires then a monkey. I will weep like Diana in the Fountaine, and I will do that when you are disposed to be merry : I will laugh like a Hyen, and that when thou art inclined to sleepe.<sup>2</sup>

Again, take Speed's speech in the first scene of the second Act of the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* :—

You have learned, like Sir Proteus, to wreathe your armes like a malecontent ; to relish a lovesong like a robin red-breast ; to walke alone like one that had the pestilence ; to sigh like a schoolboy that had lost his A.B.C. ; to weep like

<sup>1</sup> *As You Like It*, iv. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, iv. 2.



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a young girl that had buried her grandam ; to fast like one that takes diet ; to watch like one that fears robbing ; to speake puling like a beggar at Hallowmase. You were wont when you laughed to crow like a cocke, when you walked to walke like one of the lions. When you fasted it was presently, after dinner, when you looked sadly, it was for want of money. And now you are metamorphosed with a mistris, that when I looke on you I can hardly thinke you my Master.

These extracts might indeed, so far as diction is concerned, be extracts from one of Gray's or Cowper's letters, so musical, so easy, so elegant, so free from all taint of archaism are they. And yet Dr. Johnson, who edited Shakespeare, could say that Sir William Temple was the first writer who gave harmony to English prose !

It is not necessary to extend quotation further, but I would exhort any one who is inclined to dispute what we have said to examine carefully the following passages: *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act ii. sc. 1 ; *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act i. sc. 1 and Act v. sc. 2 ; almost all the prose dialogues in *As You Like It*, but particularly Act i. sc. 2, the beginning of scene 3, with the whole of the first scene of the fourth Act ; *Twelfth Night*, Act iii. sc. 1 : and it would be easy to extend our references. In this particular style of Shakespeare's prose there is one very obvious peculiarity. In addition to the colloquial ease which marks it, there is seldom wanting a sort of literary eloquence, as though he were striking a double chord, as though he were creating a

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language which is at once real and ideal, at once the speech of the beings among whom we are moving here, and of the beings of that world which exists only in the imagination of the poet. And yet the two styles are in perfect unison with one another.

Of prose professedly rhetorical Shakespeare has not left us many specimens, for he has of course usually expressed himself in blank verse, whenever his subject made it necessary for the style to be more than usually elevated. The two best illustrations of this division of his prose are perhaps the speech of Brutus over the body of Caesar, *Julius Caesar*, Act iii. sc. 2; the fine dialogue between Bates, Williams, and the King in the first scene of the fourth Act of *Henry V.*, Hotspur's soliloquy in 1 *Henry IV.* ii. 3, and the closing description of the shipwreck in the *Winter's Tale*, Act iii. sc. 3.

This last in power and vividness he has never excelled even in verse.

*Clowne.* I have seene two such sights, by sea and by land; but I am not to say it is a sea, for it is now the sky, betwixt the firmament and it you cannot thrust a bodkin's point.

I would you did but see how it chafes, how it rages, how it takes up the shore, but that's not to the point. Oh the most piteous crie of the poure soules, sometimes to see 'em and not to see 'em. Now the shippe boaring the moone with her maine mast, and anon swallowed with yest and froth, as you'd thrust a corke into a hogshhead. And then, for the land-service, to see howe the Beare tore out his shoulder-bone, how he cride to mee

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for helpe, and said his name was *Antigonus*, a Nobleman. But to make an ende of the ship to see how the sea flap-dragon'd it ! but first how the poore soules roared, and the sea mocked them ; and how the poore gentleman roared, and the Beare mock'd him, both roaring lowder than the sea or weather.

*Shep.* Why, boy, how is it ?

It is, indeed, very difficult to see why the poet has, on these occasions, selected prose in preference to verse. The subject is impressive ; the treatment is serious, the plays in which they occur are for the most part in verse. Of this, however, we purpose to say something presently.

We now come to the last of our five divisions. This is the style where Shakespeare has raised prose to the sublimest pitch of verse, and is, it must be confessed, the rarest of all his modes of expression. The finest and most obvious illustration of this is to be found in *Hamlet*, Act ii. sc. 2 :—

. . . This goodly frame, the Earthe, seemes to me a sterill Promontory : this most excellent canopy, the Ayre, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical rooffe fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to mee than a foule and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of worke is man ! How noble in reason ! how infinite in faculty ! In form and moving how express and admirable ! in action how like an angel ! In apprehension how like a God ! The beauty of the world ! the parragon of animals ! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust ?

It would be hard to cull from the whole body of our prose literature a passage which should demonstrate more strikingly the splendour and

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the majesty of our language, when freed from the shackles of verse. Of all De Quincey's many inaccurate assertions, he never made one more inaccurate than when he asserted that he—the English opium-eater—had been the first to introduce English literature to what he calls poetical impassioned prose. He might have pretended to forget, possibly he might really have forgotten, Raleigh, who furnished him with the model for one of his finest apostrophes;<sup>1</sup> he might have overlooked Milton, Taylor, and Sir Thomas Browne, but it is strange indeed that he should have overlooked Shakespeare. Another very eloquent example, but in diction more subdued and less ornate, may be found in Hamlet's speculations on the skull, and in his reflections on discovering that it was Yorick's (v. 1); in the gaoler's speech in *Cymbeline*, Act v. sc. 4; in Lear's speech, "Why, thou wert better in thy grave," etc., *Lear*, Act iii. sc. 2.

The above classification, necessarily arbitrary and imperfect, and adopted rather for purposes of convenience than proceeding on any fixed critical principle, leaves of course much of the poet's prose still unspecified. We have still to take into account his grave didactic style, of which we have several examples in *Hamlet*—his many

<sup>1</sup> Compare the concluding paragraph of the *History of the World*—"O eloquent, just, and mighty Death," etc.—with the celebrated apostrophe to opium, beginning, "O just, subtle, and mighty Opium," in the second part of the *Opium Eater*.

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soliloquies and reflections, where the language rises and falls in exquisite unison with the sentiments embodied in it, as in Benedick's speech, *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act ii. sc. 3; Launcelot, Gobbo's *Merchant of Venice*, Act ii. sc. 2; some of the speeches of Falstaff, notably the apostrophe to sherris-sack, and the soliloquy on honour; the speech of Autolycus, *Winter's Tale*, Act iv. sc. 4; of Thersites, *Troilus and Cressida*, Act ii. sc. 4; the Porter's speech in *Macbeth*, Act ii. sc. 3; Edmund's in *Lear*, Act i. sc. 2; Iago's, *Othello*, i. 3; the serious and set speeches, which might be amply illustrated from *Measure for Measure*, from *Othello*, and from *Cymbeline*; the epilogues, as at the conclusion of *As You Like It*, and the Second Part of *Henry IV.*; the various documents and letters cited by the characters.

It is interesting, for it is, we think, quite possible to watch the stages by which Shakespeare's prose arrived at maturity, and to see how it became, by degrees, a favourite instrument of expression with him. At first he used it very sparingly. In some of his earlier works it finds no place at all. There is no prose, for example, in the First Part of *Henry VI.*; there is none in *King John* or in *Richard II.*; there are only about a dozen lines in *Titus Andronicus*; there is only one short scene in *Richard III.* In *Romeo and Juliet* the proportion of prose is very small, and in the conversation between the

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Nurse and Lady Capulet (Act i. sc. 2), where we should have expected to find it, we find blank verse. In the two parts of *Henry IV.*, on the other hand, prose and verse are used in almost equal proportions, but the prose portions are, without exception, confined to the comic scenes. In *Twelfth Night* and in *The Merry Wives* prose completely supersedes blank verse, and in *Much Ado About Nothing* it is very greatly in excess of the verse, as it is in *As You Like It*. In *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*, the tone of the prose is raised; in *Hamlet* it begins to encroach on the province of blank verse, that is to say, it is employed in grave and serious passages; and in this way the poet continues to employ it through the whole series of his maturer works, except in the *Tempest*, where it is mostly confined to the baser characters, and in *Henry VIII.*, where we find it only in one short scene. The stages in the development of Shakespeare's prose are, we think, as clearly discernible as the stages in the development of his verse.

It appears for the first time in the second and Third Part of *Henry VI.*, and here it differs in no respect from the style of Marlowe and Peele; it has all their characteristics, all their stiffness, all their archaism, all their coarseness. In *Love's Labour's Lost* it is, of course, and is intended to be, merely parody. In *All's Well that Ends Well* we find it in a

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state of transition. It is frequently rough, involved, and uncouth, but it is also occasionally compact and musical. Side by side, for instance, with lumbering periods like—

Now he hath a smacke of all neighbouring languages, therefore we must every one be a man of his own fancie; not to know what we speak one to another, so we seem to know, is to know straight our purpose,<sup>1</sup>

we find a perfect period like—

The webbe of our life is of a mingled yarne, good and ill together; our vertues would bee proud if our faults whipped them not; and our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our vertues.<sup>2</sup>

In *As You Like It* the composition of the prose is as finished as that of the verse.

How delicately the poet understood, and how carefully he studied the rhythm may be seen, not only in his use of expletives, in the arrangement of his antitheses, and in his introduction of balancing clauses, but in the nice measurement of his subordinate sentences, and in his frequent inversions of the natural order of the words. When he is at his best, Isocrates and Cicero were not more solicitous about the harmony of their periods. Take the following passage from *Henry V.* :—<sup>3</sup>

Now, if these men have defeated the law and out-run Native punishment, though they can outstrip men, they

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<sup>1</sup> Act iv. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Act iv. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Act iv. 1.

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have no wings to flye from God. Warre is his beadle. Warre is his vengeance. So that here men are punished for before-breach of the King's lawes, in now the King's quarrel. Where they feared the death, they have borne life away, and where they would be safe, they perish. Then, if they dye unprovided, no more is the King guiltie of their damnation than hee was before guiltie of those impieties for the which they are now visited. Every subject's duty is the King's, but every Subject's soul is his own.

Or take the following :—

A' my word, the Fathers Sonne : Ile sweare, 'tis a very pretty boy. A' my troth I look'd upon him a Wensday, halfe an houre together : ha's such a confirm'd countenance. I saw him run after a gilded Butterfly, and when he caught it, he let it go againe, and after it againe, and over and over he comes, and up againe ; catcht it again : or whether his fall enrag'd him, or how 'twas, hee did so set his teeth, and teare it. Oh, I warrant how he manmocket it.<sup>1</sup>

Longinus has observed of a celebrated sentence in Demosthenes that so absolutely perfect is the construction, that if a synonym be substituted, if the slightest alteration be made in the order of the words, the whole is ruined,—the music is a discord.<sup>2</sup> What is true of the sentence in Demosthenes is true also of the paragraph we have just quoted, and of many other prose paragraphs in Shakespeare. Alter or omit a single word, invert a sentence, strike out a clause, change in the smallest particular a particle, and you would jar the ear of a sensitive critic, as a false note would jar the ear of a musician. Now, we do not believe that, with

<sup>1</sup> *Coriolanus*, Act i. 3.    <sup>2</sup> *De Sublimitate*, xxxix.



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the exception of Cranmer and the translators of the Bible, any other sixteenth century prose writer had so fine a perception of the native harmony of our tongue, as distinguished from a harmony borrowed from Rome.

And now it remains to say a few words on the question, whether we are justified in supposing that Shakespeare was guided by any fixed principle in his employment of verse and prose, or whether he merely employed them, as fancy suggested, for the sake of variety and relief. On this subject it would be dangerous to dogmatize. It must, of course, be obvious to every one that, as a general rule, he employs prose when he wishes to be emphatically realistic, when he is dealing with commonplace characters, is embodying commonplace sentiments, and when he is moving in the sphere of pure comedy. Thus the *Merry Wives of Windsor* is almost wholly in prose, so also is his other pure comedy *Twelfth Night*, blank verse being only employed in the romantic portion, of which the Duke who, except in one short scene, always speaks in blank verse, is the centre. It is just the same in *Much Ado*. The romantic and semi-tragic portions are in blank verse, the rest in prose. In the *Midsummer Night's Dream* the prose is confined to the Bottom scenes. There is the same clear demarcation in the Histories and Tragedies. There is always an instinct in a true artist prompting him, even at the cost of

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literary grace, to attain complete harmony between spirit and expression. We find this to be the case even in those schools where a rigid regard to form is the primary canon. We find traces of it plainly apparent in the verse of Euripides: we find it still more marked in the verse of Aristophanes and in that of the later schools of Greek comedy. We find it in Terence; we find it pre-eminently in Plautus.

As a general rule, Shakespeare's poetical conceptions naturally, and, as it were, spontaneously, clothe themselves in verse, while all that appertains to the familiar side of real life as naturally slides into its appropriate prose. The line of demarcation thus drawn between verse and prose is another proof of Shakespeare's delicate appreciation of style, another proof that he was what the French critics deny—a reflective artist. Many of his disciples have written plays in a mixture of verse and prose, but the employment of the one or the other mode of expression is with them purely arbitrary, and appears to have been introduced simply to vary the dialogue, or to save the trouble of yoking thought to metre. This is evident, not only from the fact that conceptions eminently and essentially poetical are often clothed in prose, but that their prose is very commonly nothing but loose blank verse. Webster, in his two great tragedies, constantly selects this mode of expression for his grandest and most striking

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images. The prose of Massinger and Tourneur is so rhythmical that their respective editors have boldly printed it as blank verse. And what applies to these poets will apply, with the exception of Fletcher, to all the other Elizabethan dramatists when writing tragedy. In Shakespeare's prose there is never such ambiguity. His prose is as clearly defined as his verse. However rich, however highly wrought it be, its rhythm is never the rhythm of metre, the style of its rhetoric is not the style of the rhetoric of verse.

But it would not be true to say that the poet reserves prose simply for cases where prose is dramatically appropriate. True as a rule, it is a rule which admits of many exceptions. In *Hamlet*, in *Macbeth*, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, and in *Cymbeline*—see particularly the scene between Posthumus and the gaoler; in parts of *Henry V.*, in parts of *Othello*, and in parts of the *Winter's Tale*, several speeches are in prose where we might, so far as the matter is concerned, have expected verse. In the *Merchant of Venice* it serves to maintain the equipoise between realism and romance. In *Lear*, from the third act onward, it is blended and mingled with verse, partly, perhaps, to express, and partly to heighten, the effect of the dominant anarchy. In *Hamlet* it becomes the language in which the Prince communes not with himself but with the world. In *Troilus*

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*and Cressida* it very exactly discriminates the heroic text and the burlesque and cynical commentary. In some cases, it may possibly have been used to heighten the effect of the verse immediately following. The magnificent soliloquy of Henry V. is preceded by a scene in prose. Antony's splendid rhetoric in *Julius Caesar* is ushered in by a prose speech from Brutus. In many cases, which will at once suggest themselves to thoughtful readers, it is undoubtedly used for that purpose only.

It would be idle to draw any parallel between the merits of our great poet in these two branches of composition; but we may observe that, in one or two points, his prose contrasts very favourably with his verse. His verse, in his later style at least, is frequently obscure, perplexed, and abrupt: his prose is uniformly smooth and lucid. His verse abounds in solecisms and anacolutha: his prose is, with a very few exceptions, singularly correct, and is marked by much greater purity, both of idiom and of phrase. His verse is full of mannerisms, and of mannerisms which are not at all times pleasant: his prose is always easy and natural. In a word, his most characteristic prose is, regarded merely in relation to correctness in composition, decidedly superior to his most characteristic verse.<sup>1</sup>

Margaret Fuller tells us, in one of her letters,

<sup>1</sup> As a proof of Shakespeare's felicity of expression in prose it is perhaps worth noticing that a large percentage

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that in a conversation at which she was once present, Carlyle gave it as his opinion that Shakespeare would have done far better if he had confined himself to prose. Such an opinion may well be put down as one of those paradoxes in which the sage of *Sartor Resartus* loved to indulge. Even a collection of such delightful stories as the *Decamerone*, even a romance like *Don Quixote* or *Tom Jones* would have been a

of the quotations most current from him are from this portion of his work. Such would be:—‘To hold the mirror up to Nature’: ‘To o’erstep the modesty of Nature’: ‘The abstract and brief chronicles of the time’: ‘It is a wise father that knows his own child’: ‘There’s small choice in rotten apples’: ‘Most lame and impotent conclusion’: ‘The better part of valour is discretion’: ‘Out of this nettle danger we pluck the flower safety’: ‘O that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains’: ‘One of those gentle ones that use the devil himself with courtesy’: ‘Some are born great, etc.’: ‘Every one can master a grief, but he that has it’: ‘Men are April when they woo, December when they wed’: ‘There is no darkness but ignorance’: ‘Though patience be a tired mare, yet she will plod’: ‘If it be now, ’tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is all!’ ‘He that dies pays all debts’: ‘The primrose way to the everlasting bonfire’: ‘He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument’: ‘Beggard that I am, I am e’en poor in thanks’: ‘There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so’: ‘We play the fool with the time, and the wise sit in the clouds and mock us’: ‘Trust not him that has once broken faith’: ‘The goodness that is cheap in beauty makes beauty brief in goodness’: ‘A knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear’: ‘Brevity is the soul of wit’: ‘Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?’ and the like.

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poor exchange for such works as *Lear* or *Othello*. And yet, in one way at least, we share Carlyle's regret. What student of Shakespeare could doubt that that well-nigh omnipotent genius might, had he so willed it, have accomplished for prose fiction what he has accomplished for the drama—have been the first of prose novelists, as he is the first of poets? Had he taken up the novel where Greene and Lyly left it, England would not have had to wait a century and a half for novels like Fielding's, and more than two centuries for novels like Walter Scott's.

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**I**N the Prolegomena to his edition of Shakespeare published in 1790, Malone first drew attention to Shakespeare's extraordinary fondness for legal phraseology and his not less extraordinary accuracy in its employment. "His knowledge of legal terms," wrote Malone, "is not merely such as might be acquired by the casual observation of even his all-comprehending mind; it has the appearance of *technical* skill; and he is so fond of displaying it on all occasions that I suspect he was early initiated in at least the forms of the law." He then, in a note, gives nineteen illustrations. To these illustrations many more were added by Steevens, Ritson and others of the *Variorum* Editors. Payne Collier next took up the question, and knowing that Lord Campbell, then Chief Justice of England, was interested in the question, as Campbell had more than once referred to Shakespeare's legal acquirements both in his *Lives of the Chancellors* and in his *Lives of the Chief Justices*, wrote to ask him, whether, in his opinion, there was sufficient internal evidence in the poems and

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plays to warrant the assumption that Shakespeare had received special instruction in law. The answer to this was a long and elaborate letter, published, in 1859, under the title of *Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements Considered*.

It may be sufficient here to say that Campbell, while acknowledging that there is not sufficient evidence to justify the conclusion that Shakespeare was actually a clerk in a lawyer's office, expresses his astonishment at the extent and accuracy of the poet's acquaintance with legal technicalities. The value of Campbell's contribution to the question lies rather in the authority which his name must necessarily carry on such a subject and in some of his commentaries, than in any pretention to exhaustiveness. For the most part he contents himself with the illustrations already given by Malone and Steevens. His own scrutiny of the poems and plays was, as is abundantly evident, most superficial and perfunctory ; and indeed it would be no exaggeration to say that for every one of his citations at least a dozen could be given.

So matters rested till 1897. In that year Mr. Edward James Castle re-opened the question in a volume entitled *Shakespeare, Bacon, Jonson and Greene*. This is a most interesting but disappointing book. Mr. Castle has certainly carried the question much further than any of his predecessors. He has added considerably to the illustrations given by Lord Campbell and others,



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and he has shown that the legal knowledge displayed by Shakespeare is not confined to the plays cited, in proof, by Lord Campbell. But beyond this he has not gone. With a little trouble he might have made his dissertation exhaustive, and have illustrated, not merely the nature, but the extent of Shakespeare's legal attainments. This is not the worst. Mr. Castle has, unfortunately, committed himself to a theory which has prevented him from dealing fairly and fully with the question, his object being to show that it is only in certain plays that proofs of accurate legal knowledge are found; that in other plays there are most unlawyer-like inaccuracies, and that, consequently, we are justified in concluding that the law is in no case Shakespeare's, but that it is to be attributed to some other hand, a hand that assisted him when he was correct and was absent when he was in error. Nothing could be more absurd. Many of the examples of Shakespeare's most esoteric technicalities are of the very fabric of his imagery and expression, as notably in Sonnet xlvi. The assisting hand must, indeed, throughout the poems and in two-thirds of the plays, have been as inseparable from him as the hand that held his pen. Equally fanciful is Mr. Castle's division of the plays into the legal and non-legal, in the first of which we are to class I. and II. of *Henry VI.*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Measure for Measure*; in the second,

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*Titus Andronicus, Twelfth Night, Macbeth, Othello, The Tempest.* Into an examination of the other plays he does not enter. It can, I think, be demonstrated that Mr. Castle breaks down in every one of his illustrations of alleged inaccuracy. He has either misinterpreted Shakespeare, or missed his meaning. Take the following. He observes of the phrase in *Macbeth*, "Our high-plac'd Macbeth shall live *the lease of nature*," (iv. 1), that no lawyer would be guilty of the absurdity of speaking of "a lease of nature." But what Shakespeare obviously means is, a lease *from* nature, the preposition "of" being constantly used in this sense, not merely in Elizabethan, but in modern English. Again, he cites, "I'll make assurance doubly sure and *take a bond of fate*" (*Id.*, iv. 2) as a phrase impossible and absurd in law. Why? What Shakespeare means is, I will make fate give me a bond, Macbeth not stopping to consider what should be the penalty of the bond, or how he was to enforce the remedy if the condition should be broken. Mr. Castle finds a third proof that *Macbeth* (i. 4) could not have been written by one conversant with the law, in the lines—

Is execution done on Cawdor? Are not  
Those in commission yet returned?

on the ground that, as Cawdor had not been tried—which, by the way, he cites as another and the most convincing proof that Shakespeare

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had no "legal assistance" in writing the play—no commission could have been sent, or would have been sent, to execute him, for execution was left to the sheriff. But Shakespeare does not say that the commission had been sent to execute him; on the contrary, the commission had been probably sent to try him. Nor has Mr. Castle any warrant at all for supposing that the word "law-days" in *Othello* (iii. 3), "keep leets and *lawdays*," is used in any other sense than the right sense—that is, the Court itself, "keep" being used loosely for "hold." There is, undoubtedly, hopeless confusion, from a technical point of view, in the lines in the same play:—

I was, unhandsome warrior as I am,  
Arraigning his unkindness with my soul,  
But now I find I had suborned the witness,  
And he's indicted falsely.<sup>1</sup>

But there is no more confusion here than there is commonly in Shakespeare's non-technical metaphors; and it would, certainly, not be justifiable to conclude that this confusion originated from ignorance. Some of Mr. Castle's objections are palpably absurd. Thus, he remarks of the line in "plead my successive title with your swords," *Titus Andronicus*, I. 1, that it is legally inaccurate and inappropriate; firstly, because it is incongruous to speak of pleading with a sword; and, secondly, that if we assume "successive title" to mean what, of course, it does mean,

<sup>1</sup> Act iii. sc. 4.

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“my title to the succession,” the word title is improper because redundant, as “title” implies a right to succeed. Nor is Mr. Castle justified in complaining of the passage in *Othello* (i. 2), where Brabantio says :—

I'll have 't disputed on ;  
'Tis probable and palpable to thinking ;  
I therefore do apprehend and attach thee  
For an abuser of the word, a practiser  
Of arts inhibited and out of warrant.

Here he points out that, from a technical point of view, the passage will not bear examination for a moment, and that if Shakespeare had known the law, he would, on such an occasion, have used technical language. Mr. Castle would do well to remember that, if Shakespeare occasionally spoke as a lawyer he was primarily a dramatist.

We say confidently that all attempts to divide the plays into “legal” and “non-legal” are purely fanciful. Shakespeare’s legal knowledge is no doubt much more conspicuous in some plays than in others, but it is the same in kind in all ; his apparent inaccuracies rise merely either from looseness of expression, or through metaphorical application, and are almost as common in the “legal” as in the “non-legal” plays. There is nothing whatever to warrant the assumption that his law was not his own.

And his legal knowledge was extraordinary alike both in its accuracy and in its extent.

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“There is nothing so dangerous,” observes Lord Campbell, “for one not of the craft to tamper with our free-masonry.” The author of the *Letters of Junius* at once betrayed that he could have been no lawyer, by a single remark. Speaking of the House of Commons, and desiring to say that the beneficial interest in the State belongs to the people and not to their representatives, he writes; “they are only *trustees*, the *fee* is in us,” not knowing that in the case of land held in trust the *fee* is in the trustee, the beneficiary having only an equitable interest. But to Shakespeare’s law, says Lord Campbell, “lavishly as he propounds it, there can neither be demurrer, nor bill of exceptions, nor writ of error.” Take a few illustrations out of very many. First of the law of real property. “Like a fair house built upon another man’s ground; so that I have *lost my edifice, by mistaking the place where I erected it.*” *Merry Wives* (ii. 2). Here, says Lord Campbell, Shakespeare shows that he was aware of a fact of which few laymen are aware, namely, that a house and the materials of its structure, being fixed to the freehold, become the absolute property of the owner of the soil, *cujus est solum ejus est usque ad coelum*. So, when he writes in the same play, “If the Devil have him not in fee simple with fine and recovery, he will never, I think, in the way of waste, attempt us again,” he writes in a language unintelligible to any

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but the initiated. In the following passage in the *Comedy of Errors*, ii. 2, Campbell discerns a familiarity “with some of the most abstruse proceedings in English jurisprudence.”

*Drom. S.* There’s no time for a man to *recover* his hair  
that grows bald by nature.

*Ant. S.* May he not do it by *fine and recovery* ?

*Drom. S.* Yes, to pay a *fine* for a periwig and *recover* the  
lost hair of another man.

In *Venus and Adonis* (l. 521) we have :—

Say for non-payment shall the debt be double ?

No mere layman, as Malone observes, would have been likely to know that, on a conditional bond becoming forfeited for non-payment of money borrowed, the whole penalty, which was usually double the principal sum lent by the obligee, was formerly recoverable at law. In the partition of England between Mortimer, Glendower and Hotspur, in 1 *Henry IV.*, iii. 1, we have exactly the process of the partition of a manor between joint tenants, tenants in common or co-parceners—a deed of partition tripartite drawn.

And our indentures tripartite are drawn,  
Which being sealed interchangeably  
(A business that this night may execute),  
To-morrow, Cousin Percy, you and I,  
And my good Lord of Worcester will set fast.

There is the same technical exactness displayed in drawing up, or in describing legal docu-

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ments, as in the *Midsommer Night's Dream* (i. 1), where Egeus adds quite unnecessarily to the words "according to our law," the words "immediately provided in that case," the precise formula being "in such case made and provided." So, too, in the indictment on which Lord Say is arraigned in 2 *Henry VI.*, iv. 7, of which Campbell says "it is quite certain that the drawer of this indictment must have had some acquaintance with *The Crown Circuit Companion*, and must have had a full and accurate knowledge of that rather obscure and intricate subject, Felony, and Benefit of Clergy." So in *Troilus and Cressida*, iii. 2, where Pandarus says—

What! billing again? Here's *In witness*  
*The parties interchangeably*—

the exact form of the testatum clause in an indenture—"In witness whereof the parties interchangeably have hitherto set their hands and seals."

In *As You Like It*, iii. 1, "a deep technical knowledge of law is displayed," says Campbell. The usurping Duke Frederick, wishing all the real property of Oliver to be seized, awards a writ of extent upon him.

Make an *extent upon his house and lands*.

Here Shakespeare was aware of the exact writ needed, namely an *extendi facias*, which

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applies to house and lands, as distinguished from a *fieri facias*, applying to goods and chattels, and a *capias ad satisfaciendum*, applying to the person; just as the "omnivorous" nature of a writ of *Praemunire* is described in *Henry VIII*.

Lord Cardinal, the King's further pleasure is,  
Because all those things you have done of late

Fall into the compass of a praemunire,  
That therefore such a writ be sued against you,  
To forfeit all your goods, lands, tenements,  
Chattels, and whatsoever; and to be  
Out of the King's protection.

In the second scene of the first act of the *Comedy of Errors* we have a minutely technical account of an English arrest on Mesne Process before judgment, in an action on the case; and in Portia's words, *Merchant of Venice*, v. 1—

Let us go in,  
And charge us there upon inter'gatories,  
And we will answer all things faithfully—

we have an exact description of the procedure in the Court of King's Bench, when a complaint is made against a person for contempt; the practice being, says Lord Campbell, that before sentence is finally pronounced the person against whom complaint is made is sent into the Crown office, and being there "charged upon interrogatories," made to swear that he will "answer all things faithfully."

Sonnet xlvi. is so interesting, from the legal



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point of view, that I cannot do better than transcribe it with Lord Campbell's commentary.

Mine Eye and Heart are at a mortal War  
How to divide the conquest of thy sight;  
Mine Eye my Heart thy picture's sight would bar,  
Mine Heart mine Eye the freedom of that right.  
My Heart doth plead that thou in him dost lie,  
(A closet never pierced with crystal eyes,)  
But the defendant doth that plea deny,  
And says in him thy fair appearance lies.  
To 'cide this title is impannelled  
A quest of thoughts, all tenants to the Heart;  
And by their verdict is determined  
The clear Eye's moiety, and the dear Heart's part:  
As thus: mine Eye's due is thine outward part,  
And my Heart's right thine inward love of heart.

“I need go no further than this sonnet, which is so intensely legal in its language and imagery, that without a considerable knowledge of English forensic procedure it cannot be fully understood. A lover being supposed to have made a *conquest* of (i.e. to have gained by *purchase*) his mistress, his Eye and his Heart, holding as joint tenants, have a contest as to how she is to be partitioned between them, each moiety then to be held in severalty. There are regular pleadings in the suit, the Heart being represented as plaintiff, and the Eye as defendant.

“At last issue is joined on what one affirms and the other denies; and now a jury (in the nature of an inquest) is to be empanelled to 'cide (decide), and by their verdict to apportion between the litigating parties the subject matter to be divided. The jury fortunately are unanimous, and, after due deliberation, find for the Eye in respect of the lady's outward form, and for the Heart in respect of her inward love.”<sup>1</sup>

Lord Campbell also comments on the accuracy of Shakespeare's acquaintance with the various

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements*, pp. 102-103.

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forms and incidents of legal procedure, in the scene in *Lear* describing the imaginary arraignment of Goneril and Regan (iii. 6); in the trial scene in *The Merchant of Venice* (iv. 1), and in the proceedings connected with the bond (*Id.*, i. 3, and ii. 8); in the controversy in the opening scene of *King John*; in the trial of Othello before the Senate (*Othello*, i. 3); and in the trial of Queen Hermione, in spite of the indictment being not altogether according to English form and "liable to be held insufficient on a writ of error" (*Winter's Tale*, iii. 2). In this last play Lord Campbell notices a curiously minute reference to a custom of the Courts in old times. It is where Hermione says to in Polixenes (Act i. 2)—

Force me to keep you *as a prisoner*,  
Not like a guest: *so you shall pay your fees*,  
*When you depart.*

The Clerk of Assize and the Clerk of the Peace were entitled to exact their fee from all acquitted prisoners, and even to have a lien on their persons for it. Even now, says Campbell, the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker of the House of Commons say to prisoners about to be liberated from the custody of the Black Rod or the Serjeant-at-arms, "You are discharged, paying your fees." When Dogberry, in *Much Ado About Nothing* (iii. 3), instructs his men "to keep your fellows' counsel, and your own."

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Campbell also notes, how he uses the very words of the oath, administered by the Judge's marshal to the Grand Jury, at the present day.

How accurately Shakespeare was acquainted with the precise meaning of legal expressions is illustrated by his use of them in the following passages.

Of my land,  
Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means  
To make thee *capable*.

(*Lear*, ii. 1.)

This is exactly the word employed in discussion respecting legitimacy, the question being put, whether the individual, whose status is to be determined, is "capable," i.e. capable of inheriting. So again the word "colour" in its strictly technical sense, that is a probable but false plea, the object of which was to draw the decision of the case from the jury to the judges, by making the point *sub judice* appear to be one of law and not of fact; or, as Cowell puts it, "Colour signifieth in the Common Law a probable plea but in truth false, and hath this end, to draw the triall of the cause from the jury to the judges."<sup>1</sup> In this sense it is constantly used by Shakespeare—

Why hunt I then for *colour* and excuses.  
(*Lucrece*, st. 39.)

The *colour* on thy face  
Shall plead for me . . .

---

<sup>1</sup> *Interpreter*, sub verb.

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Under that *colour* am I come to scale  
Thy never-conquer'd fort.

(*Id.*, st. 69.)

Under what *colour* he commits this ill.

(*Id.*, st. 68.)

So 2 *Henry IV.*, iii. 1.

But yet we want a *colour* for his death.

and 1 *Henry IV.*

For of no right nor *colour* like to right.

(1 *Henry IV.*, iii. 2.)

So in *Antony and Cleopatra*, i. 4.

His faults, in him, seem as the spots of heaven  
More fiery by night's blackness: *hereditary*  
Rather than *purchas'd*.

Where the word does not of course mean  
"bought for money," but is used in its techni-  
cal sense as opposed to *descent*, as it is also  
2 *Henry IV.* (Act iv. 4)—

For what in me was *purchased*

Falls upon thee in a more fairer sort,

i.e. what I took by purchase you will take by  
descent.

In the phrase in 1 *Henry IV.*, iii. 2, "*Enfeoff'd*  
himself to popularity," we have a most felicitous  
adaptation of the exact legal meaning of the  
term, as Malone notes: a feoffment being a  
method of conveyance by which all lands in  
England were granted in fee simple, being ac-  
companied with livery of seisin. In a very  
obscure passage in *Measure for Measure* (ii. 4)—

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*Ang.* We are all frail.

*Isab.* Else let my brother die,

If not a feodary, but only he,

Owe and succeed by weakness—

if Warburton's explanation be the correct one, we have a very ingenious application of feudal Law. He explains it thus: "Now, says Angelo, we are all frail." Isabella replies, "If all mankind were not feodaries who owe what they are to this tenure of imbecility, and who succeed each other by the same tenure, as well as my brother, I would give him up; the comparison being to mankind, lying under the weight of original sin, to a feodary who owes suit and service to his lord." <sup>1</sup>

Of Hamlet's speech when speculating on the skulls thrown up by the digger, beginning, "There's another, why may not that be the skull of lawyer?" (Act v. 1), Lord Campbell observes, "these terms of art are all used, seemingly with a full knowledge of their import, and it would puzzle some practising barristers with whom I am acquainted to go over the whole *seriatim*, and to define each of them satisfactorily."

It is not likely that Shakespeare had studied or was even acquainted with Plowden's *Commentaries and Reports*, which were only accessible to him in Norman-French, but there can be no doubt, as Sir John Hawkins was the first to point out, that in the grave-digging scene in *Hamlet* he has made merry with the famous

<sup>1</sup> *Variorum Shakespeare* (Edition 1813), vol. vi. p. 282.

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case of Hales *versus* Petit, tried in the third and fourth years of Elizabeth's reign, and reported by Plowden.<sup>1</sup> Lord Campbell has told the story, but it will bear telling again. In 1564 Sir James Hales, a puisne Judge of the Common Pleas, committed suicide by drowning himself, and a verdict of *felo-de-se* was returned by the Coroner's Jury. It happened that, at the time of his death, he was joint tenant with his wife of an estate in the County of Kent. Had he not died by his own hand she would have taken the whole by survivorship, but, under the circumstances, as the Crown could not become joint tenant with a subject, the Crown took the estate, and it was conferred on one Cyriac Petit. Upon that Lady Hales brought an action against Petit to recover it, contending that the forfeiture had not taken place in the lifetime of her husband, and that, consequently, the estate was hers by survivorship. The point on which the case turned was this; was the crime, which involved the forfeiture, committed in Sir James' lifetime? Lady Hales' Counsel contended that it was not; for, it is not enough to meditate an act, to resolve upon it, to put it into execution, the act must be complete, and complete it could not be in his lifetime, because as long as he was alive he had not killed himself, and the moment he died the estate vested in the joint-tenant.

<sup>1</sup> See *Commentaries and Reports of Plowden*. English Trans. Ed. 1761. Part i. pp. 253-264.

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Till the death was fully completed he could not be *felo de se*, and the death preceded both the felony and the forfeiture which was the result of the felony.

The Counsel for the defendant urged, on the contrary, that as soon as death occurred it referred back to the act which caused it, in this case a felony. "The act consists of three parts: the first is the imagination, which is a reflection or meditation of the mind . . . the second is the resolution, which is a determination of the mind to destroy himself. The third is the perfection, which is the execution of what the mind has resolved to do. And of all the parts, the doing of the act is the greatest, in the judgment of our law, and it is, in the effect, the whole. Then, here, the act done by Sir James Hales, which is evil and the cause of his death, is the throwing of himself in the water, and the death is but a sequel thereof."

The Court took this latter view of the case, and gave judgment for the defendant, conceding that Sir James could hardly have killed himself in his lifetime, but pronouncing that the forfeiture should relate to the act done by him in his lifetime, the act which was the cause of death, namely, the throwing himself into the water.

Sir James was dead, and how came he by his death? by drowning; and who drowned him? Sir James Hales; and when did he drown him? in his life-time. So that Sir James Hales being alive, caused Sir James Hales to die; and the act of the living man was the death of the dead man. He, therefore, committed felony in his life-time, although there was no possibility of the forfeiture being found in his life-time, for, until his death, there was no cause of forfeiture.

That Shakespeare was burlesquing this at

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the opening of the first scene of the last act of *Hamlet* there can be no doubt at all. Let us place the passage beside it.

1 *Clo.* Is she to be buried in Christian burial that wilfully seeks her own salvation ?

2 *Clo.* I tell thee, she is ; therefore make her grave straight : the crowner hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial.

1 *Clo.* How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence ?

2 *Clo.* Why, 'tis found so.

1 *Clo.* It must be *se offendendo* ; it cannot be else. For here lies the point : If I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act ; and an act hath three branches ; it is to act, to do, and to perform. Argal, she drowned herself wittingly.

2 *Clo.* Nay, but hear you, Goodman delver.

1 *Clo.* Give me leave. Here lies the water ; good : here stands the man ; good : if a man goes to this water and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes : mark you that : but if the water come to him, and drown him, he drowns not himself. Argal, he, that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

2 *Clo.* But is this law ?

1 *Clo.* Ay, marry is't ; crowner's-quest law.

Scenes in which the law in one or other of its aspects and associations, now, in its procedure and ministers ; now, in parodies burlesque as well as serious, of its provisions or documents, appear in more than one half of his dramas. Thus we have, in the Three Parts of *Henry VI.*, the scene in the Temple Gardens, the Parliamentary scene and the Jack Cade scenes so full of legal jargon. In *King John* the controversy between Robert and Philip Falconbridge ; in *Richard II.* the controversy between Bolingbroke and Nor-



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folk; in the Two Parts of *Henry IV.*, besides the scenes in which the Chief Justice appears, the law in some of its associations meets us at every turn; in *Henry V.* we have the address to the conspirators at Southampton; in *Henry VIII.* we have the arraignment of Catherine. The *Midsummer Night's Dream* opens with a law scene; we have more than one law scene in the *Comedy of Errors*, while *The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure* abound in them. In *Lear* we have the imaginary arraignment of Goneril and Regan, and numerous references to the law's iniquities. We have the Grave-Digger scene in *Hamlet*, the trial of the Moor before the Senate in *Othello*, and the trial of Hermione in the *Winter's Tale*. *Timon* is full of legal allusions, and so are *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus* and *Cymbeline*.

The number of metaphors, illustrations, and turns of expression, derived from the Law, and these often of a most technical kind, to be found in the poems and plays, is extraordinary. Shakespeare's mind seems always to be reverting to it. Whatever be his theme, love, death, war, business, pleasantry, argumentation, didactic admonition, philosophic reflection, it is always at hand to point and colour his imagery and diction. Let us take the poems.

In what was probably the earliest of his poems, *A Lover's Complaint*, we find the curious expression—

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My woeful self, that did in freedom stand  
And *was my own fee-simple*.

(St. 21.)

“That is,” explains Malone, “had an absolute power over myself, as large as a tenant in fee has over his estate.”

In *Venus and Adonis* we find—

But, when the heart's *attorney* once is mute,  
The *client* breaks, as desperate in his suit.

(St. 56.)

Which *purchase* of them make, for fear of slips  
Set thy seal-manual on my wax-red lips.

(St. 86.)

Say for *non-payment* that the debt be double.

(St. 87.)

In the *Rape of Lucrece* the allusions are less technical, and out of the eleven which may be noted<sup>1</sup> the following may be cited—

Why hunt I then for *colour* or excuses.

(St. 39.)

The deep vexation of his inward soul  
Hath serv'd a *dumb* arrest upon his tongue.

(St. 255.)

But the Sonnets teem with them, there being at least thirty-eight;<sup>2</sup> take a few typical instances:—

<sup>1</sup> Stanzas 39, 68, 69, 86, 114, 132, 133, 135, 147, 173, 255.

<sup>2</sup> See Sonnets, ii., iv., vi., ix., xiii., xviii., xxvi., xxx., xxxv., xxxvii., xlvi., xlix., lxxiv., lxxxvii., lxxxviii., xcii., cvii., cxvii., cxx., cxxiv., cxxv., cxxvi., cxxxiii., cxxxiv., cxxxv., cxxxvii., cxlii., cxlvi.

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So should that beauty, which you *hold in lease*,  
Find no *determination*. (xiii.)

My *bonds* in thee are all *determinate*,  
For how do I *hold* thee but by thy *granting*.  
(lxxxvii.)

He learn'd but, *surety-like*, to write for me,  
*Under that bond* that him as fast doth bind ;  
The *statute of thy beauty* thou wilt take,  
Thou *usurer*, that puts forth all to use

He pays the whole and yet I am not free.  
(cxxxiv.)

Why so *large cost*, *having so short a lease*?  
(cxlvi.)

This last line Campbell ridiculously explains as a reference to taxing an over-charge in the attorney's bill of costs, ignoring, I suppose, the context—

But be contented when that *fell arrest*  
*Without all bail* shall carry me away.  
(lxxiv.)

### A metaphor repeated in *Hamlet*.<sup>1</sup>

The *charter of thy worth* gives thee *releasing*,  
My *bonds* in thee are all *determinate*.  
(lxxxvii.)

Him have I lost ; thou hast both him and me,  
*He pays the whole and yet I am not free*.  
(cxxxv.)

The whole of Sonnets iv., xlvi., lxxxvii., cxxxiv. are elaborately legal in their imagery.

Illustrations from the plays would be endless.

<sup>1</sup> This fell sergeant, Death  
Is strict in his arrest. (v. 2.)

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It will be well, therefore, to confine ourselves to examples of them where they might be least expected. Would he describe what Byron calls "a long, long kiss, a kiss of youth and love," it becomes "a kiss in fee-farm" (*Troilus and Cressida*, iii. 2), that is, as Malone explains it, "a kiss of a duration that has no bounds—a fee-farm being a grant of lands in fee, that is for ever, reserving a rent certain"; or "a seal of bliss" (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, iii. 2), or "seals of love," *Measure for Measure*, iv. 1.

But my kisses bring again,  
Seals of love, but seal'd in vain.

In *King John* the act of kissing is thus expressed—

Upon thy cheek I lay this zealous kiss,  
As seal to this indenture of my love.

In *Richard III.* iv. 4, he uses a word not to be found, probably, out of legal documents—

Tell me what state, what dignity, what honour,  
Can'st thou *demise* to any child of mine.

To Hamlet death comes as a sheriff's officer, with a writ of *Capias ad satisfaciendum*.

Had I but time,—as this *fell sergeant, Death,*  
*Is strict in his arrest.* (v. 2.)

When Macbeth meditates the death of Banquo, he invokes Night to

*Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond*  
*Which keeps me pale.* (iii. 2.)

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And Posthumus, welcoming death, says

Take this life  
And *cancel these cold bonds*. (*Cymbeline*, v. 4.)

So Romeo calls on Juliet to

Seal with a righteous kiss  
A *dateless bargain to engrossing death*.  
(*Rom. and Jul.*, v. 3.)

While the effect of death, legal as well as general, is noted in

The end of life cancels all bonds.  
(1 *Henry IV.*, iii. 2.)

And in *Tempest*—

He that dies pays all debts. (iii. 2.)

So in *Cymbeline*—

All lovers young, all lovers must  
*Consign* to thee, and come to dust ;

i.e. subscribe, seal to, ratify.

When Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page are discussing whether they shall pursue Falstaff further, the first puts it as—

What think you? May we with *warrant* of womanhood and the *witness* of a good conscience pursue him with any farther revenge?

the other replies :

The spirit of wantonness is, sure, scared out of him : if the devil have him not *in fee-simple*, with *fine and recovery*, he will never, I think, *in the way of waste*, attempt us again.

(*Merry Wives*, iv. 2.)

So again in *Love's Labour's Lost* we have a passage turning on the technicalities of law.

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*Boyct.* So you *grant* pasture for me.

*Maria.* Not so, gentle beast,

My lips are no *common*, though *several* they  
be.

*Boyct.* Belonging to whom?

*Maria.* To my fortunes and me.

To hold lands *in severalty* is to hold them in one's own right without any person being joined or connected with the owner in point of interest. "Common" is the right of feeding our beasts on another's lands; so that the point of Maria's remark depends entirely on the technical turn she gives it.

When Parolles would describe the abandoned corruption of Captain Dumain, he observes that

For a quart d'ecu he will sell the *fee-simple* of his salvation, the *inheritance* of it, and *cut the entail from all remainders*, a perpetual succession for it perpetually.

(*All's Well That Ends Well*, iv. 3.)

And Mercutio uses the same language—

An I were so apt to quarrel as thou art, any man should buy the *fee-simple* of my life for an hour and a quarter.

(*Rom. and Jul.*, iii. 1.)

Would Iachimo, describe how he deceived Posthumus, he says that his story was so plausible that Posthumus

Could not

But think her *bond of chastity quite crack'd*,  
I *having ta'en the forfeit*.

(*Cymbeline*, v. 5.)

And when, in the early part of the same play Posthumus, in reply to Imogen's request that

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he would keep the ring she gives him till she was dead and he wooed another for his wife, replies in what appears to be a very curious legal metaphor.

You gentle gods, give me but this I have,  
And *sear* up my embracements from a next  
*With bonds of death.*

(ii. 1.)

Which seems to mean "let me enter into a bond with death, which shall close up and so prevent any second marriage."<sup>1</sup>

When Proteus in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*,<sup>2</sup> wishing to sneer at Thurio, by affecting to suppose that his "possessions" meant not his lands and estate but mental endowments, his gibe takes the form of the application of a legal reference—

*Thurio.* Considers she my possessions?

*Proteus.* O, ay : and pities them.

*Thurio.* Wherefore?

*Proteus.* That they are out *by lease.*

That is, as Lord Hailes explains, that they are not their master's who is a fool, but are leased out to another.

It is to legal imagery that John of Gaunt reverts in describing the degradation of England.

<sup>1</sup> But for this difficult passage see the *Variorum* Commentators and Dyce's Glossary (Ed. Littledale, v. 430).

<sup>2</sup> Act v. sc. 2.

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The land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land,  
Dear for her reputation through the world,  
Is now leas'd out . . .

Like to a tenement or pelting farm

. . . is now bound in with shame,

With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds

(*Rich. II.*, ii. 1);

—in legal phrase that Richard bitterly comments on Bolingbroke's policy in courting the people.

As were our England in *reversion* his

And he our subjects' next *degree* in hope.

Even in the Forest of Arden the imagery and expressions are constantly reverting to the Law. "Be it known unto all men by these presents," says Rosalind, quoting in translation the first clause in all deeds poll, *Noverint universi per præsentis* (i. 2). A snail, with his house on his head has "a better *jointure*" than Orlando can "make a woman," who is also to "die by attorney." When Jacques moralizes on the stricken deer he thinks of the "poor and broken bankrupt," his tears as they fall into the brook reminding him of the "testaments that worldlings make."

Giving thy sum of more

To that which had too much.

(*As You Like It*, ii. 1.)

Would Hamlet describe how he chose Horatio for his friend, he puts it:—

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,

And could of men distinguish, her election

Hath *sculed* thee for herself.

(iii. 2.)



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Just as when he wishes to express that, however severely he reproaches his mother, his words shall not be confirmed by action, he resorts to the same metaphor.

To *give them seals* never, my soul, consent.

In *Troilus and Cressida*, iii. 3, we have a singularly happy application of legal metaphor:—

Omission to do what is necessary  
*Seals a commission to a blank* of danger ;

where the reference is to the “blanks” or blank papers given to the agents of the Crown, which they were to fill up as they pleased, to authorize the demands they chose to make.<sup>1</sup>

Macbeth, though assured that he need not fear Macduff, yet will

Make assurance double sure  
And *take a bond of fate* ;

and so,

Live the *lease of Nature*.

(*Macbeth*, iv. 1.)

When Olivia would apologize to Viola for the insults of Sir Toby, she says—

Let thy fair wisdom—not thy passion sway  
In this uncivil and unjust *extent*  
Against thy peace

(*Twelfth Night*, iv. 1) ;

<sup>1</sup> Stow records that “Richard II. compelled all the religious Gentlemen and Commons to set their seals to *blankes*, to the end he might, if it pleased him, oppress them.” See Dyce’s Glossary, though he does not refer to the present passage.

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the reference being to the enforcement of the writ *Extendi facias* referred to before in *As You Like It*. Queen Elizabeth again speaks like a lawyer when, in answering the Duchess of York's question,

Why should calamity be full of words?

she exclaims—

Windy *attorneys* to their *client* woes,  
Airy succeeders of *intestate* joys.  
(*Rich. III.*, iv. 4.)

When Henry IV asks whether he should condescend to come to terms with Worcester, Northumberland and Percy, who, by turning rebels, had deprived themselves of the position and privileges of subjects, his question assumes the form of—

Shall we buy treason? and *indent* with fears,  
When they have lost and *forfeited* themselves?  
(1 *Henry IV.*, i. 3.)

Iago, commenting on the impure thoughts which intrude themselves, at times, in all minds, derives his imagery from the same source.

Who has a breast so pure,  
But some uncleanly apprehensions  
Keep *lets* and *law-days*, and in *session sit*  
With meditations lawful?  
(*Othello*, iii. 3.)

So again in the same play (iii. 4) the passage already quoted—

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I was . . . . .

*Arraigning* his unkindness with my soul :  
But now I find I had *suborn'd the witness*,  
And he's indicted falsely.

No one unacquainted with the logic of the law could possibly have written Hamlet's speech to Laertes, excusing himself for what he had done on the plea of madness—

Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? never Hamlet :  
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,  
And when he's not himself, does wrong Laertes,  
Then Hamlet does it not ; Hamlet denies it.  
Who does it, then? His madness if it be so,  
Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd ;  
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

(v. 2.)

While, in the last couplet, we certainly seem to have a reference to the well known maxim of the law about the punishment of madmen, "furiosus solo furore puniatur."<sup>1</sup>

But it would be tedious to accumulate further illustrations. Enough have been cited to prove not only that Shakespeare had a

<sup>1</sup> For this I am indebted to Mr. W. L. Rushton's most interesting, but too brief, little brochure on *Shakespeare's Legal Maxims*. Mr. Rushton accumulates some very remarkable instances of the way in which Shakespeare illustrates maxims laid down in *Coke upon Littleton*, and in other ancient legal authorities. Among other things, he points out the parallel between Angelo's remark in *Measure for Measure* (ii. 2), "The law hath not been dead, though it hath slept," and 2 *Instit.* 161, "Dormiunt aliquando leges, moriuntur nunquam."

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remarkably extensive and accurate acquaintance with the English law, but that his memory, during his whole career, was habitually reverting to it and to its associations. It is, therefore, quite possible that the conjecture of Chalmers, corroborated by Malone and supported by Payne Collier and Lord Campbell, namely, that Shakespeare was in early life employed as clerk in an attorney's office, may be correct. At Stratford there was by royal charter a Court of Record sitting every fortnight, with six attorneys, beside the town-clerk, belonging to it,<sup>1</sup> and it is certainly not straining probability to suppose that the young Shakespeare may have had employment in the office of one of them.

There is, it is true, no tradition to this effect, but such traditions as we have about Shakespeare's occupation between the time of leaving school and going to London are so loose and baseless that no confidence can be placed in them. It is, to say the least, more probable that he was in an attorney's office than that he was a butcher killing calves "in a high style" and making speeches over them. Lord Campbell acutely observes that his Will, "simple, terse, and condensed," is much more likely to have been drawn up by himself than by a Stratford attorney, who would be paid by the

<sup>1</sup> Campbell, p. 21.

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number of lines contained in it, and that it displays considerable technical skill, not only in the propriety of the terms in which the testator's meaning is expressed and the efficiency with which its provisions are secured, but in the substitution of "give" for "devise" in the clause referring to the non-realty bequest to his wife.

It may, of course, be urged that Shakespeare's knowledge of medicine, and particularly of that branch of it which relates to morbid psychology, is equally remarkable, and that no one has ever contended that he was a physician. It may be urged that his acquaintance with the technicalities of other crafts and callings, notably of marine and military affairs, was also extraordinary, and yet no one has suspected him of being a sailor or a soldier. This may be conceded, but the concession hardly furnishes an analogy. To these and to all other subjects he recurs occasionally and in season, but with reminiscences of the law his memory, as is abundantly clear, was simply saturated. In season and out of season, now in manifest, now in recondite application he presses it into the service of expression and illustration. At least a third of his myriad metaphors are derived from it. It would indeed be difficult to find a single act in any of his dramas, nay, in some of them, a single scene, the diction and imagery of which is not coloured by it. (Much of his law

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may have been acquired from three books easily accessible to him, namely Tottell's *Precedents* (1572), Pulton's *Statutes* (1578), and Fraunce's *Lawier's Logike* (1588), works with which he certainly seems to have been familiar; but much of it could only have come from one who had had an intimate acquaintance with legal proceedings. We quite agree with Mr. Castle that Shakespeare's legal knowledge is not what could have been picked up in an attorney's office, but could only have been learned by an actual attendance at the Courts, at a pleader's chambers, and on circuit, or by associating intimately with members of the Bench and Bar.

Perhaps the simplest solution of the problem is, to accept the hypothesis that in early life he was in an attorney's office; that he there contracted a love for the law which never left him; that as a young man in London, he continued to study or dabble in it for his amusement, to stroll in leisure hours into the Courts, and to frequent the society of lawyers. On no other supposition is it possible to explain the attraction which the law evidently had for him, and his minute and undeviating accuracy in a subject where no layman, who has indulged in such copious and ostentatious display of legal technicalities, has ever yet succeeded in keeping himself from tripping.

## VI

### SHAKESPEARE AND HOLINSHED<sup>1</sup>

THE hearty thanks of all students of Shakespeare are due to Mr. Boswell-Stone. It is, of course, notorious that every one of Shakespeare's English Histories, as well as *Macbeth* and the historical portions of *Lear* and *Cymbeline*, were founded on Holinshed's *Chronicles*. With a fulness and accuracy which leaves nothing to be desired, Mr. Boswell-Stone has collected those passages from the *Chronicles* on which the poet has drawn, either directly for the general fabric of his plots, or collaterally for hints and suggestions. And the value of Mr. Boswell-Stone's work is enhanced by the admirable method adopted by him. He follows the poet, step by step, through Holinshed's narrative, printing at length such portions of it as correspond to what is reproduced in the dramas; interpolating episodically the passages from other parts of the *Chronicles* which Shakespeare has utilised, or which may have furnished him with

<sup>1</sup> *Shakspeare's Holinshed. The Chronicles and the Historical Plays Compared.* By W. G. Boswell-Stone.

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hints; noting variations, whether of suppression, expansion, or modification; and italicizing such expressions and particulars as have been literally and exactly transferred.

In a word Mr. Boswell-Stone has done for Holinshed and Shakespeare, though with infinitely greater elaboration, what Mr. Montgomerie Ranking, and others have done for Malory and Tennyson. Not that any comparison can be drawn between the nature and extent of Shakespeare's indebtedness to Holinshed and Tennyson's to Malory; for the debt, in truth, differed not in degree but in kind. The noblest portions of the *Idylls* not only took their colour, but derived their inspiration from Malory; what Tennyson himself imported into them was in essence of inferior quality to what he sought to modify. The *Morte d'Arthur* was the work of a great artist and a great genius, and as such it appealed to and affected the poet who recast and adapted it. The only dramatic figure in the *Idylls* was the creation of Malory; the only really dramatic scenes in them owed the breath of their life to his origination. But the relation of Holinshed's *Chronicles* to the dramas evolved from them is, even when Shakespeare's debt is greatest as in *Macbeth*, precisely that of the skeleton to the living man. In general, the nature of the relation might be more appropriately indicated not by comparison with a skeleton but with a farrago of unarticulated bones. With



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Mr. Boswell-Stone's assistance I propose presently to illustrate Shakespeare's method of dealing with the *Chronicles*, but before doing so it may be well to say a word or two about the *Chronicles* themselves.

Of Holinshed himself, nothing certain is known, except that he came to London early in Elizabeth's reign, and obtained employment as a translator in the office of Reginald Wolfe, the Queen's Printer; that he assisted Wolfe and Wolfe's successors in the compilation of the English, Scottish and Irish histories, part of an immense design for a Universal History projected by Wolfe but afterwards abandoned; that he made his Will in October, 1578, in which he describes himself as steward to Thomas Burdet of Bramcote in Warwickshire; and that he was dead in April, 1582, as his will was proved on the 24th of April, that year.

The *Chronicles* form a complete history of Great Britain from the landing of the fabulous Brutus to the reign of Elizabeth. But, from the period of Henry IV's accession, it practically incorporated a work written with far greater ability and eloquence, namely Edward Hall's Chronicle, *The Union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre and Yorke*, whole pages of which it frequently reproduces word for word: in dealing with the reign of Richard III the work attributed to Sir Thomas More is treated in the same way. The first edition of

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the *Chronicles* appeared in 1577, in two volumes folio, and was mainly the work of Holinshed, though he had assistance from other hands, particularly from William Harrison, who wrote the Description of Britain with which the *Chronicles* open. The second edition, supervised and enlarged by Abraham Fleming, John Hooper, Francis Thynne and others, appeared in 1586-7, after Holinshed's death, and contained very important omissions and additions; the omissions being necessitated in consequence of exception being taken to certain passages by Queen Elizabeth and her ministry,<sup>1</sup> the additions being introduced, that the annals might be brought down to Jan. 1587. Which edition Shakespeare used it is impossible to say with certainty, it is generally supposed to be the first, but the balance of probability inclines to the second.<sup>2</sup> In any case the work must have been a life-long companion, for he drew on it in some of the earliest of his plays, *Henry VI.* and *Richard III.*, and he drew on it in what was certainly among his last, *Cymbeline*. His familiarity with every part of this compilation is, indeed, attested not merely by the dramas which he directly founded on it,

<sup>1</sup> These excisions, the political reasons for which are generally obvious, were reprinted in folio in 1728, and have been re-inserted in the 6 vol. 1807-8 quarto edition of the *Chronicles*.

<sup>2</sup> In *Henry VIII.* he must certainly have used the second edition, unless he went to Stow for the parts of the play based on Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey*.

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but by the material which he has utilised collaterally, and by the frequent reminiscences of it scattered all over his serious plays.

I have, elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> remarked that it was a peculiarity of Shakespeare's genius not so much to create but to realize; that his shaping energy was not, so to speak, self-evolved, or his material furnished for him by his own imagination. Hence he never invented his plots, he never, with one exception—Caliban—invented a character. For the first a mere outline would suffice, but the outline must be provided; for the second as slight a sketch, perhaps little more than a hint, would serve, but that sketch or hint was required. Nothing can illustrate this more strikingly than Shakespeare's use of Holinshed. Let us first take *Macbeth*. He found the story in Holinshed's History of Scotland (*Chronicles*, vol. ii. pp. 168–76. 2nd ed.).

Holinshed begins by telling us that Macbeth and Duncan, who succeeded Malcolme, were cousins; that Duncan being of a "soft and gentle nature" ruled with so loose and weak a hand that the kingdom was in anarchy and rebellion. Pre-eminent among the leaders stirring up these seditions was one Macdonald, who not only placed himself at the head of a rabble of native malcontents, but brought together out of the *Western isles* "a mighty power of men as well as a number of *Kernes and Galloglasses from Ireland*."

<sup>1</sup> See page 71.

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As it was necessary to suppress Macdonald's rebellion, Macbeth and Banquo were sent against him. They were victorious; Macdonald was slain, according to Holinshed by his own hand, according to Shakespeare by Macbeth; his head was cut off, sent to the king and hung upon "a high paire of gallows" (Holinshed), "upon our battlements" (Shakespeare). Next came Sweno King of Norway "with a puissant army"; and another victory not described by Shakespeare was won by Macbeth and Banquo. While the Scotch were rendering thanks to God for sending them so *faire a day* over their enemies, a new fleet of Danes sent by Canute, King of England, in revenge for his brother Sweno's overthrow, arrives. Again Macbeth and Banquo are triumphant. "They that escaped and got once to their ships obtained of Macbeth, for a great sum of gold, that such of their friends as were slaine at this last 'bickering' might be buried in Saint Colmes Inch"—a comparatively important incident which, however, Shakespeare has carefully reproduced.

Sweno, the Norway's king craves composition,  
Nor would we deign him burial of his men,  
Till he disbursed at St. Colmes Inch  
Ten thousand dollars to our general use.

Now, here we have the complete outline, as well as the chief details, of the second scene of *Macbeth*, with the exception of the part played by the Thane of Cawdor, who in Holinshed is not mentioned as having any part in these transac-

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tions. But with these transactions it was convenient, for dramatic purposes, to associate the crime which cost him his life, and Shakespeare has, therefore, with great skill identified the treason of which, according to Holinshed, Cawdor was subsequently guilty, with treason committed at this juncture. Nor must we forget to note how evidently the poet had been impressed with the character of Duncan, and how faithfully he reproduces it. We next come to the Witches. The hint for their characteristics as well as the germ of the whole of the third scene is evidently to be found in Holinshed's account of the bewitchment of King Duff (*Chron.*, ii. 149).

He could not sleepe in the night-time by anie provocations that could be devised. . . . There was a murmuring amongst the people how the king was vexed . . . by sorcerie and magicall art practised by a sort of witches, dwelling in a towne of Murray-land called Fores.

Then he goes on to describe the images of wax melting at the fire, "and as the image did waste afore the fire, so did the king's flesh." With this compare—

I will drain him dry as hay ;  
Sleep shall, neither night nor day,  
Hang upon his pent-house lid ;  
He shall live a man forbid,  
Weary sev'n nights, nine times nine,  
Shall he dwindle peak and pine.

To proceed :—

Shortlie after, happened a strange and uncouth wonder, which afterwards was the cause of much trouble in

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the realm of Scotland. . . . It fortun'd as Makbeth and Banquho journ'd towards Fores, where the king then laie, . . . suddenlie in the middest of a laund there met them three women, in strange and wild apparell, resembling creatures of elder world, whome when they attentivelie beheld, woondering much at the sight, the first of them spake and said: All haile, Makbeth, Thane of Glammiss! (for he had latelie entered into that dignitie and office by the death of his fathere Sineel). The second of them said: Haile, Makbeth, thane of Cawdor!" But the third said: "All Haile, Makbeth, that hereafter shalt be King of Scotland." Then Banquho: "What manner of women, saith he, "are ye that seem so little favourable unto me, whereas to my fellow heere, besides high office, ye assigne also the kingdom, appointing foorth nothing for me at all?" "Yes" (saith the first of them) "we promise greater benefits unto thee than unto him, for he shall reigne indeed, but with an unluckie end; neither shall he leave any issue behind him to succeed in his place, where contrarilie thou indeed shalt not reign at all, but of thee those shall be borne which shall govern Scotland by long order of continuall descent." Herewith, the foresaid women vanished immediatelie out of their sight. This was reputed at the first but some vaine fantastical allusion by Makbeth and Banquho.

Holinshed then goes on to say, that Banquho would call Macbeth in jest "King of Scotland," and Macbeth would call him in sport "the father of manie kings." At last—for in Holinshed an indefinite time elapses between this incident and the fulfilment of the first prophecy—the first prophecy is fulfilled, for—

Shortly after, the Thane of Cawdor being condemned at Fores of treason against the king committed, his lands, livings and offices were given . . . to Macbeth.

It is easy to see how all this lived to the

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inflamed imagination of the poet; how it dominated, how it possessed him; how, "though clinging close to every detail in the plain prose of the old Chronicler, he developed, he connected, he fused into unity.<sup>1</sup> Out of the simple words "Whereupon Macbeth, revolving the thing in his mind, began, even then, to devise how he might attain to the kingdom," added to what is afterwards said about Macbeth's murderous purpose being precipitated by Duncan electing Malcolm Prince of Cumberland, is evolved the fourth scene. Out of the following passage—

The words of the three weird sisters also . . . greatly encouraged him hereunto, but speciallie his wife lay sore upon him to attempt the thing, as she that was verie ambitious, burning in unquenchable desire to beare the name of a queene—

are partly evolved the character and part played by Lady Macbeth, and the whole of the wonderful fifth scene of the first act.

Then, for the details of the murder, Shakespeare turns to another part of the *Chronicles*, where Holinshed describes the murder of King Duff by Donwald (*Chron.*, ii. p. 159). Here we have, in suggestion and outline, all that lies between the seventh scene of the first act and the end of act two. But how has

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the graphic passage in *The Ring and the Book*, where Browning describes how the story of which he there treats possessed and inspired him. *The Ring and the Book*, Bk. I., 457-678.

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the skeleton been clothed with flesh and had breathed into it the breath of life! How has the dull bald narrative been transmuted into thrilling drama, the lay-figures into human beings! Holinshed begins by describing how Donwald conceived inward malice against the king, till "through setting on of his wife," and in revenge of Donwald's unthankfulness, "hee found meanes to murder the king, within the castle of Fores." This was the more easily accomplished because the king had "a special trust in Donwald, as a man whom he never suspected." The Chronicler then describes how Donwald's wife, perceiving that there was something troubling his mind, "ceased not to travell with him, till she understood what was the cause of his displeasure."

Husband and wife, having come to an understanding, resolve to murder the king, while a guest in their castle; the wife "shewing him the meanes whereby he might soonest accomplish it." It is arranged that the king's two chamberlains, who sleep in his room, shall be drugged with drink; that the king shall be assassinated; that the "sleepy grooms" shall be charged with the murder and murdered too, in order that the guilt of those who had instigated the crime might not be divulged. In one important particular Shakespeare deviates from Holinshed, and in so doing adds immensely to the dramatic effect. Holinshed represents the murder as



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committed not by Donwald himself, but by four of his servants. For the rest, the poet and the historian agree. Perhaps nothing illustrates so strikingly Shakespeare's method as what he has evolved out of a single sentence. "Then Donwald *though he abhorred the act greatlie in heart, yet, at the instigation of his wife*" proceeded to carry it out. To this we owe what is embodied in the superb soliloquy in the seventh scene, as well as in the subsequent interview between Macbeth and his wife. The masterly interpolation of the Porter scene, which has nothing to correspond to it in Holinshed, is followed by a scene of which we have the counterpart in the *Chronicle*, namely Donwald's hypocritical and over-acted horror at the murder of the king, and his own murder of the chamberlains. In what follows Shakespeare returns to the Macbeth story. But before taking up that narrative we may pause to notice the use to which the poet has placed another passage in another portion of the *Chronicle*.

The lines—

Methought I heard a voice cry "*Sleep no more*"—

Still it cried "sleep no more" to all the House ;  
"Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more ; Macbeth shall sleep no more"—

were probably suggested by Holinshed's account of the remorse of Kenneth for having poisoned his nephew, Malcolm Duff. The

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Chronicler tells how Kenneth heard a terrifying voice, as he lay in bed in the dead of the night, cursing him, and depriving him of sleep.<sup>1</sup>

In the account of the storm and portents attending the murder, the poet closely follows the Chronicler's account of the portents attending the murder of King Duff<sup>2</sup>:—"outrageous winds arose with lightnings and tempests, monstrous sights were seen . . . horses in Louthian, being of singular beautie and swiftness, did eate their own flesh . . . There was a sparhawke also strangled by an owle."

*Lenox.* The night has been unruly. Where we lay,  
Our chimneys were blown down.

. . . . .

*Macb.* 'Twas a rough night.

(ii. 3).

*Old Man.* On Tuesday last,  
A falcon, tow'ring in her pride of place,  
Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.

. . . . .

*Ross.* And Duncan's horses, a thing most strange and  
certain—  
Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,  
Turn'd wild . . .

*Old Man.* 'Tis said they eat each other.

*Ross.* They did so.

Malcolm and Donalbain now make their way, as Shakespeare duly notes, the one to England, the other to Ireland.

Holinshed then proceeds to give an account

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicles*, ii. 158.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, ii. 151-152.

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of some ten years of Macbeth's reign which Shakespeare omits, noting how he did many "woorthie doings and princelie acts," and made "many holesome laws and statutes." At last he began to have fears of Banquo. "For the pricke of conscience . . . caused him to feare lest he should be served out of the same cup, as he had ministered to his predecessor"—a passage no doubt remembered by Shakespeare when he put into Macbeth's mouth the words—

This even-handed justice  
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice  
To our own lips. (Act i. 7.)

"The words also of the three weird sisters," continues the Chronicler, "would not out of his mind, which as they promise him the kingdom, so likewise did they promise it at the same time unto the posterity of Banquo." Macbeth determines, therefore, to have Banquo and his son murdered. Assassins are hired; and the two are to be despatched on their way home from a supper at the palace. Banquo is murdered, but Fleance escapes. Here, as in the murder of Duncan, Shakespeare's magnificent embroidery is seen in all its glory. The interview with the murderers; the interview with Lady Macbeth; the murder itself; the feast;—all have been added by him. Next comes the rupture with Macduff. According to Holinshed, it originated, in the first instance, from Macduff refusing to assist in building Dunsinane; accord-

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ing to Shakespeare, in his declining to be present at the coronation feast (iii. 4).

And now we come to the germ of the great witch scene and of what led to the final catastrophe. The skill with which Shakespeare has dove-tailed scattered incidents and particulars found in Holinshed is as remarkable as the marvellous power with which he has dramatized them. In the following is the germ of the last scene with the witches.

He had learned of certeine wizards in whose words he put great confidence, (for that the prophesie had happened so right which the three faeries or weird sisters had declared unto him,) how that he ought to take heed of Makduffe who in time to come should seek to destroy him . . . A certeine witch, whome hee had in great trust, had told him that he should never be slaine by man borne of anie woman, nor vanquished, till the wood of Bernane came to the castell of Dunsinane. By this prophesie Macbeth put all fear out of his heart . . . for by the one prophesie he believed it was impossible for any man to vanquish him, and by the other impossible to slea him.<sup>1</sup>

This the poet seizes. The "certeine wizards," and "a certeine witch whom he had in great trust" become the three witches, and the stupendous first scene of the fourth act takes form. It may be noted, in passing, that he again resorts to Holinshed for the pageant-pedigree of Banquo descendants.

Macbeth now resolves to seize Macduff's castle, proclaim him a traitor and massacre his wife, children, and servants, as "Makduffe, to

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicles*, ii. 174.

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avoid perile of life, purposed with himself to pass into England to procure Malcolm Canmore, to claime the crowne of Scotland." This project of Macduff's having come to Macbeth's ears, because "he had in everie man's house one slie fellor or other in fee with him to reveale all that was said or done." Shakespeare duly notes this particular (Act iii. 4).

There's not a one of them but in his house  
I keep a servant fee'd.

A deviation from Holinshed enables Shakespeare to give us one of the most pathetic passages even he ever wrote—the scene (iv. 3) where Ross announces to Macduff the murder of his wife and children, Holinshed pre-dating this event, and representing Macduff as coming to England "to revenge the slaughter so cruellie executed on his wife, her children and other friends."

In the account given of the exiles in England Shakespeare follows his original closely, and in Malcolm's self-depreciating speeches to Macduff (iii. 4) and Macduff's replies he simply versifies Holinshed's narrative. It is curious, too, that the passage in which the Doctor describes the miraculous gifts of healing, possessed by the king, Shakespeare should have adapted a passage from Holinshed's account of Edward the Confessor, the king in question.

As hath been thought, he was inspired with the gift of prophesie, and also to have had the gift of healing infirmi-

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ties and diseases. He used to help those who were vexed with the disease commonlie called the king's evill.<sup>1</sup>

To the first scene of the fifth act, "the sleep-walking scene," and to all in the act which relates to Lady Macbeth, there is nothing to correspond in Holinshed; but, for the rest, Shakespeare follows him, in outline, closely. Thus the *Chronicle* describes how the English forces under Malcolm and Macduff, accompanied by old Siward Earl of Northumberland and ten thousand men with him, march into Scotland; how Macbeth fortifies himself in Dunsinane, is deserted by his subjects, "which stale dailie from him," but how, strong in the confidence he had in the two prophecies, he continues to show a bold front; how one of the prophecies collapsed, by Malcolm commanding every man to get a bough from some tree as big as he could carry, and hold it before, so that as his army advances from Birnane wood to Dunsinane it seemed that the wood was moving onward; how Macbeth, though struck with panic at this portent, still clung desperately to the other prophecy, till he is confronted with Macduff; and how, finally, Macduff explaining that he was not "born" of woman, slew the murderer of his wife and children, and "cutting his head from his shoulders set it upon a pole and brought it unto Malcolme," who shortly afterwards was crowned at Scone.

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicles*, i. 195.

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In this fifth Act there are two curious illustrations of the minute care with which Shakespeare studied Holinshed. In the third scene Macbeth calls Malcolm's English allies "epicures." Now in a later passage of the *Chronicles* (vol. ii. 180) Holinshed tells us that the Scotch received Donalbain with favour, because he "abhorred the riotous manners and superfluous gormandizing . . . of the English likerous delicats." The other is the passage where, on Earl Siward hearing of his son's death, he asks "Had he his hurts before?" And on Rosse replying "Ay, on the front" the Earl exclaims :

Why, then, God's soldier be he !  
Had I as many sonnes as I have hairs,  
I would not wish them to a fairer death,  
And so his knell is knoll'd.

(Sc. 8.)

This is plainly derived from an anecdote of Siward told in Holinshed's account of the reign of Edward the Confessor (vol. i. 192). Young Siward was killed, and when his father heard the news he demanded "whether he received the wound whereof he died, in the forepart of the bodie or in the hinder part ; and when it was told him that he received it in the forepart : 'I rejoise (saith he), even with all my heart, for I wish neither to my sonne nor to myselfe any other kind of death.'"

Such, then, was the material which Holinshed supplied to Shakespeare, and such was Shake-

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sppeare's method of dealing with it. Of the process by which *Macbeth* and his Histories were evolved there can be no doubt. Having settled on his subject and his period, to concentrated work he went. With Holinshed's narrative, to its minutest particulars of detail and even of phraseology, he simply saturated his memory; imagination co-operating, realized, vivified, supplemented; then came in the enthusiast, the humorist and the artist to inspire, to irradiate, to inform. In *Macbeth* indeed the humour is confined to one short scene, but this is eminently characteristic.

Of the group of dramas founded on Holinshed *Macbeth* is of course pre-eminent in tragedy, and the two parts of *Henry IV.* in tragi-comedy, for *Lear* and *Cymbeline* scarcely belong to this group. And in these three plays much of what is most impressive, and characteristic, the scenes, for example, of which Lady Macbeth is the centre in the one, and the scenes of which Falstaff is the centre in the others, owe practically nothing to Holinshed's suggestion. But in the other English historical plays Holinshed is scarcely ever out of the poet's hands. In considering them in relation to the *Chronicles* it may be well to take them not in order of composition but of chronological sequence. *King John* stands alone, as the only study of Plantagenet England. With *Richard II.*, followed by the two parts of *Henry IV.*, *Henry V.*, the three



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parts of *Henry VI.*, and *Richard III.* we have what is practically a dramatized history of England from 1398 to 1485; last comes, disconnected from the series, *Henry VIII.*

In *King John* Shakespeare follows so closely the play on which it is founded, *The Troublesome Raigne o' John King of England*, a play itself founded on the *Chronicles*, that he probably made no independent use of them. In *Richard II.* Holinshed's narrative is simply dramatized, there being only two scenes in the play which have nothing to correspond to them in the *Chronicles*, the scene in the Duke of York's garden (iii. 4) and the parting of Richard and the Queen on his way to the Tower (v. 1). But all that constitutes the life and soul of the drama—the picture of Richard, “his reluctance to part with the crown, his fear to keep it, his weak and womanish regrets, his starting tears, his fits of hectic passion, his smothered majesty”;<sup>1</sup> the portrait of the stern and pitiless Bolingbroke and of the noble old patriot John of Gaunt; the gentle-hearted Queen; the pathos, the eloquence, all are Shakespeare's.

In the two parts of *Henry IV.* the poet's obligations to Holinshed are confined simply to the meagre outline of the purely historical portions. For the pathetic character of Henry and for his position as under the Nemesis for the crime

<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, Works (Ed. 1848), vol. iii. p. 121.

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committed in the preceding drama; for the characters of Prince Hal, beyond the mere tradition of his youthful irregularities; for the characters of Hotspur, of Glendower, of Lady Percy; for the comic characters and the comic scenes he had not even a hint in the *Chronicles*. But with what scrupulous care he had read them is abundantly evident in the fidelity with which he reproduces minor historical particulars and phrases in expression. It is, perhaps, worth noticing that in the forest scene of the fourth Act of Part II. an incident recorded in another part of the *Chronicles* has furnished him with a very striking simile. Henry, speaking of Prince Hal, says—

Till that his passions, like a whale on ground,  
Confound themselves with working.

This certainly seems to have been suggested by the following. "In the island of Thanet besides Ramsgate . . . a monstrous fish or whale of the sea did shoot himself on shore, where, for want of water, beating himself on the sands, he died." <sup>1</sup>

But to continue. In *Henry V.* he follows Holinshed even more closely than in *Macbeth*. The personality of the king, who has been called Shakespeare's ideal man, is modelled trait for trait, touch by touch, on Holinshed's summary of his characteristics; indeed, the elaborate and scrupulous care with which Shakespeare has

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iii. p. 1259.

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copied every feature of Holinshed's portrait is not a little remarkable. It is, however, worthy of notice that he lays much more stress on Henry's piety and clemency than Holinshed does. In the frame-work of the plot his only interpolations are the comic and Fluellen scenes, with the account of Falstaff's death, the scenes with Catharine) the conversation with Bates, Court and Williams, and Henry's subsequent soliloquy. But all these are most ingeniously connected with the historic narrative. For instance, Holinshed relates that in spite of the king's orders to his soldiers to refrain from pillage, "a souldier took a pix out of a church for which he was apprehended . . . and strangled."<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare represents this soldier as being Bardolph (iii. 5); just as Fluellen's commentaries on the mines (iii. 1), and on killing the prisoners (iv. 7), and the scene with Pistol, the boy and the French soldier, grew out of Holinshed's account of Gloucester's mines,<sup>2</sup> of Henry's orders to kill the prisoners,<sup>3</sup> of the French imploring the English soldiers to spare their lives.<sup>4</sup> In the second scene of the first Act the long speech of the Archbishop of Canterbury in support of Henry's claim to the throne of France is almost word for word from Holinshed, and the substance of all that precedes and all that follows is derived with scarcely any variation from the *Chronicles*.

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicles*, vol. iii. p. 552.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 549.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 554.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 554.

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But the fine speech of the Archbishop, beginning: "Therefore doth heaven divide," is purely original, a glorious illustration of Shakespeare's superb embroidery. Another equally striking example of the poet's power of illumining and vivifying his original follows not long afterwards in the account of the conspiracy at Southampton (ii. 2). Holinshed gives no hint of the king luring the traitors to pass judgment on themselves by their merciless protest against his intention of extending pardon to the drunken soldier who had slandered him. To Shakespeare, too, belongs, with the exception of the lines referring to Scroop, the fine speech of the king, "The mercy that was quick in us of late," etc., but how closely he follows Holinshed in his final address will be evident from the following passage:—

Having thus conspired the death and destruction of me, which am the head of the realm and governour of the people, it maie be no doubt but that you likewise have sworne the confusion of all that are here with me, and also the desolation of your own countrie . . . Revenge herein touching my person though I seeke not: yet for the safeguard of you, my deere friends, and for due preservation of all sorts I am, by office, to cause example to be shewed. Get you hence, therefore, ye poore miserable wretches, to the receiving of your just reward: wherein Gods majestie give you grace, of his mercie, and repentance of your heinous execution.<sup>1</sup>

God quite you in his mercy! Hear your sentence.  
You have conspired against our royal person,  
Join'd with an enemy proclaim'd, and from his coffers

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicles*, iii. 548.

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Receiv'd the golden earnest of our death ;  
Wherein you would have sold your king to slaughter,  
His princes and his peers to servitude,  
His subjects to oppression and contempt,  
And his whole kingdom into desolation.  
Touching our person seek we no revenge.  
But we our kingdom's safety must so tender,  
Whose ruin you have sought, that to her laws  
We do deliver you. Get you, therefore, hence,  
Poor miserable wretches, to your death :  
The taste whereof, God, of his mercy, give you  
Patience to endure, and true repentance  
Of all your dear offences.

(ii. 2.)

To the fourth scene of this Act there is nothing exactly corresponding in Holinshed, but it dramatizes Henry's despatch to Charles VI and the account of the council which, Holinshed tells us, was called by the Dauphin. The noble speech of Henry cheering his men up the breach at Harfleur, which opens the third Act, is wholly Shakespeare's, evolved simply from the words : " And dailie was the toun assaulted " ; nor is there anything which corresponds to his appeal to the citizens of Harfleur, which opens the third scene. In the fifth scene of the third Act we have an illustration of the way in which Shakespeare sometimes adopts the very language of Holinshed. It is in Henry's speech to Mountjoy.

Turn thee back  
And tell thy king I do not seek him now.

Go bid thy master well advise himself.  
If we may pass, we will ; if we be hinder'd,  
We shall your *tawny ground with your red blood*  
Discolour.

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Holinshed writes:—

Mine intent is to doo as it pleaseth God. I will not *seeke your master* at this time, but if he, or his, seeke me I will meet with them, God willing. If anie of your nation attempt once to stop me in my journie towards Calis, at their jeopardie be it; and yet wish I not anie of you so unadvised, as to be the occasion that I dye *your tawnie ground with your red bloud*.<sup>1</sup>

The whole of the fourth Act, including the Chorus, follows Holinshed closely, but some of the most impressive passages have been interpolated by Shakespeare, such as the scene on the eve of the battle between the King, Bates, Court and Williams, evolved from this single sentence in Holinshed: "It is said that as he heard one of his host utter his wish to another thus: I would to God there were with us now so manie good soldiers as are at this houre within England! the king answered, I would not wish a man more than I have."<sup>2</sup> The king's soliloquy, one of the noblest passages even in Shakespeare, is, as has been already noted, purely original; the pathetic prayer of the king before the battle is also original, but may have been suggested to the poet by the incident he refers to, namely, the transference of King Richard's body from Langley to Westminster and its honourable burial there, recorded by Holinshed in another place.<sup>3</sup>

The rest of the drama closely follows the *Chronicles*, with the exceptions already noticed.

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicles*, vol. iii. p. 552.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 553.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 543.

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Here, then, Shakespeare's debt is a considerable one, but it extends no further than framework, outline and suggestion. Here, as elsewhere, the informing soul is his own, his own the splendid embroidery: his own the wit, the wisdom, the glory.

It would be tedious to follow him, as Mr. Boswell-Stone has duly and fully done, through the three parts of *Henry VI*. Such a review would again illustrate with what scrupulous care he had studied Holinshed, even to the refinement of comparing him with Hall, whom he sometimes prefers. One point, however, it may be well to notice. Many of Shakespeare's admirers, notably Mr. Swinburne, have expressed surprise and disgust at the revolting picture he presents of Joan of Arc. But he was simply reproducing what he found in Holinshed,<sup>1</sup> who was, of course, as ignorant as himself of the turns which have since been given to the legend.

We now come to *Richard III*. If Shakespeare owes to Holinshed the prototype of his ideal man, he also owed to him the prototype of that character who stands with Aaron, Edmund and Iago at the head of his villains. Lessing has pointed out how, in making Richard III. the protagonist of a tragedy, Shakespeare has violated that Aristotelian canon which he has elsewhere, consciously or instinctively, observed. But he took the character exactly as he found it in the *Chron-*

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicles*, vol. iii. p. 604.

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*icles.* As by careful preliminary study he realized Holinshed's hero, so by equally careful preliminary study he realized Holinshed's devil. In his account of Richard, Holinshed incorporates the accounts given of him by More and Hall, and out of a comparative study of these accounts Shakespeare constructed his monster.

Little of stature, ill-featured of limmes, crooke backed, his left shoulder higher than his right, hard-favoured of visage . . . malicious, wrathfull, envious, and from afore his birth ever froward . . . He came into the world with his feet forward . . . and, as the fame runneth, not untoothed . . . With large gifts he gat him unsteadfast friendship, for which he was faine to pill and spoile in other places, and got him steadfast hatred. He was close and secret, a deepe dissembler, lowlie of countenance, arrogant of heart, outwardlie companiable where he inwardly hated, not letting to kisse whom he meant to kill . . . Friend and foe was much what indifferent where his advantage grew . . . his face was small but his countenance cruell, that, at first aspect, a man would judge it to savour and smell of malice, fraud and deceit . . . When he stood musing he would bite and chaw busilie his nether lip: . . . He was of a readie, pregnant, quicke wit.

So runs Holinshed's account, compiled from More and Hall.

If we compare this with Shakespeare's picture of Richard in the sixth scene of the fifth Act of *3 Henry VI.*; with the soliloquies placed in his mouth in *Richard III.*, Act i. scene 1 and scene 2; with the scenes with Clarence, Anne, and with Elizabeth and the Grey faction in the first Act; with the scenes with the Princes, with Hastings on the Tower walls, and in Baynard's Castle in



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the third Act; and with Queen Elizabeth, Queen Margaret, and the Duchess, in the fourth; we shall see that Shakespeare simply develops what More, Hall, and Holinshed describe or suggest. In his fidelity, indeed, to this portrait he has even given Richard an extra coating of blacking, for there is nothing in either More, Hall or Holinshed to warrant the representation of Clarence being murdered by Richard's orders.

Among Shakespeare's most remarkable deviations from the *Chronicles* are, besides what has just been mentioned, the introduction of Anne at the funeral of Henry VI; the introduction of Margaret of Anjou, who was never at Edward's Court, and who was, at this time, in France; and the privity of Buckingham to the murder of the young princes. Among Shakespeare's most characteristic additions are the second scene of the first Act, where Richard stops the funeral and woos Anne; the third scene of the same Act where Margaret intervenes; the details of Clarence's last hours and murder in the scene which follows; the first scene of the third Act where Richard escorts the princes to the Tower, evolved from a few lines in Holinshed describing how Richard took the young Duke of York in his arms, and kissed him, saying, "Now welcome, my lord, with all my verie heart . . . and brought him unto the king his brother . . . into the Tower";<sup>1</sup> the fourth scene of the fourth Act where Marga-

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicles*, vol. iii. p. 721.

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ret, Elizabeth, and the Duchess of York converse together and confront Richard on his way to Bosworth Field; and the account of Richard's last night on earth. This last scene was evolved from the following passage in the *Chronicles* :—

The fame went that he had the same night a dreadfull and terrible dreame : for it seemed to him, being asleepe, that he did see diverse images, like terrible diuels, which pulled and haled him, not suffering him to take anie quiet or rest. The which strange vision not so suddenlie strake his heart with a sudden feare but it stuffed his head and troubled his mind with manie and dreadful imaginations. For incontinent after, his heart being damped, he prognosticated before the doubtful chance of the battle to come, not using the alacritie and mirth of mind and countenance as he was accustomed to do, before he came toward the battell.<sup>1</sup>

The mathematical precision with which Shakespeare assembles the ghosts gives an air of unreality to the scene in which he expands the above passage, so that, in this case, he can hardly be said to improve on his original. His symmetry, indeed, trembles on the grotesque. The ensuing orations of Richmond and Richard to their respective armies follow the *Chronicles* very closely.

In addition to frame-work and suggestion, many effective touches and particulars are directly drawn from the original narrative. Such would be the pathetic speech which Edward makes, in his remorse for Clarence's

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicles*, vol. iii. p. 755.

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death, when he is asked to pardon Stanley's servant, Act ii. 2.

Had I a tongue to doom my brother's death  
And shall that tongue give pardon to a slave?  
My brother kill'd no man: . . .  
And yet his punishment was bitter death;  
Who sued to me for him? etc.

### Compare with:—

Although King Edward were consenting to his death yet he much did lament his unfortunate choice . . . insomuch, that when anie person sued to him for the pardon of malefactors condemned to death, he would accustomable saie and openlie speak, "Oh unfortunate brother for whose life not one would make sute!"<sup>1</sup>

As in the other plays, we see the same vigilance in noting and appropriating any striking image, and striking images are not common in the *Chronicles*. So finding this passage in the *Chronicles*:<sup>2</sup>—

Before such great things mens hearts of a secret instinct of nature misgive them, as the sea without wind swelleth of himselfe sometime before a tempest.

he takes care to reproduce it:—

Before the days of change, still is it so:  
By a divine instinct mens minds mistrust  
Pursuing danger: as, by proof we see  
The water swell before a boist'rous storm.

Holinshed appears to have got it from Seneca.<sup>3</sup> Of the care with which Shakespeare retains the

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicles*, vol. iii. p. 703.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 721.

<sup>3</sup> See *infra*, p. 358.

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most unimportant details we have an illustration in the fourth scene of the third Act, where Richard says to the Bishop of Ely :—

My lord of Ely, when I was last in Holborn  
I saw good strawberries in your garden there ;  
I do beseech you send for some of them.

*Ely:* Marry, and will, my lord, with all my heart.

So the *Chronicles*.

After a little talking with them, he said unto the bishop of Elie, “ My lord, you have verie good strawberries at your garden in Holborn. I require you let us have a messe of them.” “ Gladly, my lord ” (quoth he).<sup>1</sup>

It is scarcely necessary to say that in this drama Shakespeare has immortalized a portrait and a career as purely fictitious as the popular representation of Machiavelli. In truth More's account of Richard and of Richard's actions, which is adopted and reproduced by Hall and Holinshed, is as romantic, as purely a figment of the imagination, as his *Utopia*. Whether he or Cardinal Morton is to be held responsible for it, grosser, and in all probability more baseless calumnies, have never been circulated about an English prince. When Shakespeare adopted them they had passed into tradition, and, even if he suspected them to be fiction, he would probably have had little scruple in giving currency to a fiction so acceptable to his audience and to Queen Elizabeth.

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicles*, vol. iii. p. 722.

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And now we come to *Henry VIII*. Into the many problems connected with the authorship and the period of the composition of this play this is not the place to enter. But perhaps I may be allowed to say that, for my own part, I can see no sufficient reason for doubting the Shakespearean authorship of any portion of it, assuming that part of it was written early in Shakespeare's career, and that this part was more or less revised when, at a much later period, he took it up again and finished it. In none of his dramas is Holinshed, and what Holinshed incorporates or adopts, the *Chronicles* of Hall and Stow, Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey* and Campian's *Irish Histories*, followed so closely. It is simply a dramatization of the *Chronicles*. Scene by scene it follows them ; scarcely anything of importance is added, scarcely anything of importance is altered, except an interpolation from Foxe. In what pertains to dramatisation alone is there any embroidery, and this is almost confined to the scene where Anne Boleyn and the old lady converse ; to Buckingham's address to the people ; to Wolsey's two great speeches ; to the scene portraying the last hours of Katharine ; to the comic scene in the Palace Yard ; and to Cranmer's speech at the christening of Elizabeth. The rest merely conveys the dramatic presentation of what is expressed or of what is implicit in the prose narrative. It is remarkable that for the

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first and second scenes of the fifth Act, the king's friendship for Cranmer, and the feud between Gardiner and Cranmer, Shakespeare has quitted Holinshed and gone to Foxe,<sup>1</sup> whom he follows with the same fidelity. The leading characters—Henry, Buckingham, Wolsey, Queen Katharine, Cranmer and Gardiner reproduce in every trait and quality their prototypes in the *Chronicles*. Henry is, so to speak, deduced from what Holinshed tells of him and from the speeches which he puts in his mouth; Buckingham from Holinshed's account of his conduct at his trial and from his speech to Norfolk.

My Lord of Norfolk, you have saide as a traitor should be said unto, but I was never anie; but I nothing maligne for that you have doone unto me, but the Eternal God forgive you my death, and I doo. I shall never sue to the king for life, howbeit he is a gracious prince and more grace may come from him than I desire. I desire you, my lords and all my fellows, to pray for me.

Sir Thomas Lovell desiring him to sit on the cushions and carpet ordered for him, he said, "Nay for when I went to Westminster I was Duke of Buckingham, now I am but Edward Bohun, the most caitife of the world." <sup>2</sup>

For Wolsey Shakespeare required no more than the elaborate character of him given by Holinshed and Campian,<sup>3</sup> which the poet has versified in the speeches of Katharine and

<sup>1</sup> *Acts and Monuments*, ii., 1756, 1 and 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Chronicles*, vol. iii. p. 917.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 917, 922.

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Griffiths (Act iv. 2) and in Holinshed's touching account of his last days, reproduced by Griffiths in the same scene. For Katharine, he would need nothing more than the beautiful speech made by her at her trial, reported by Holinshed,<sup>1</sup> and versified almost literally in the fourth scene of the third Act, Henry's character of her,<sup>2</sup> and Holinshed's account of her last days.<sup>3</sup> For Cranmer, Foxe's picture would suffice. For Gardiner what more would he want than the following?

He was of a proude stomake, and high minded, in his oune opinion and conceite flatteryng himselfe too much ; in wit, craftie and subtile : towards his superior flattering and faire-spoken ; to his inferiors fierce ; against his equal stout and envious, namely if in judgment and sentence hee anything withstode him.<sup>4</sup>

It has been conjectured that *Henry VIII.* was produced hurriedly and under pressure, for representation on some great public occasion at which it was fitting to emphasize the triumph of Protestantism, possibly for the coronation of James I and Anne of Denmark, possibly for the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth with the Prince Palatine of the Rhine. This is not at all unlikely. With Holinshed at his side or in his memory, its composition, or, assuming that it had been begun before, its completion

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 907.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 939.

<sup>3</sup> *Acts and Monuments*, II. 1759, 1 and 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1679, 1.

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could have cost a skilled craftsman like Shakespeare very little trouble.

Lastly we come to *Lear* and *Cymbeline*. In *Lear* Shakespeare's indebtedness to Holinshed, though obvious, is very slight, and is almost confined to the first scene of the first Act, that is to Lear's purposed partition of his kingdom—and even here there are important variations; to the replies given by his daughters, when asked to testify their affection; and to the rupture with Cordelia, and her portionless marriage with the King of France. Beyond this he borrows nothing further from the story, except the subsequent quarrel with Goneril and Regan in consequence of their ungrateful determination to "scant Lear's sizes," and deprive him of his retinue, and the subsequent reconciliation with Cordelia. For nothing else in *Lear* is there even a hint in Holinshed, and the catastrophe is entirely different from the catastrophe in Holinshed, and in the old play which follows Holinshed.

In *Cymbeline* his obligations are greater, but yet very slight. These are confined to the historical portion and to the names; the relation with the Romans; the exaction of the tribute and its rejection; the war with Rome; the triumph of the Britons; all these are derived somewhat confusedly from the *Chronicles*. Cymbeline and his two sons, Guiderius and Arviragus, he found in Holinshed's narrative. Several passages in the



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play, 'i.e. ii. 4, 20-26 ; iii. 1, 26-31, 62-65, 70-75,<sup>1</sup> show, however, in their allusions, how carefully Shakespeare had studied the history. From other parts of the *Chronicles* he derived, or appears to have derived, as Mr. Boswell-Stone points out,<sup>2</sup> the names Cloten, Imogen (Innogen, the wife of Brutus), Cornelius, Helen, Lucius, Morgan, Polidore, Posthumus and Sicilius. Mr. Boswell-Stone also thinks that the description given by Posthumus of the means by which the Britons won the victory over the Romans (v. 3, 3-58) was suggested to Shakespeare by Holinshed's account of the restitution of victory to the Danes by one Haie and his two sons in the second volume of the *Chronicles*, p. 155. The parallels are close, and this is very probable.

I will conclude as I began with a hearty expression of thanks to Mr. Boswell-Stone, who, if he has not furnished us with commentary, has given us a text without which no commentary would be possible. A more interesting and useful contribution to the critical study of Shakespeare no scholar could, I repeat, have made. It must have cost its compiler much time and labour, but it is time and labour which have not been thrown away. Nothing, however trifling, which throws any light on the work of so mighty a genius as Shakespeare, or

<sup>1</sup> Pointed out by Mr. Boswell-Stone.

<sup>2</sup> *Shakspeare's Holinshed*, pp. i., 17-18.

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helps us to understand how that work came into being, can be otherwise than important. But here we are admitted into his very workshop, can watch the crude material gradually taking shape, and learn, to comfort our mediocrity, that even his unparalleled powers and gifts did not disdain the virtues of humbler artists, judicious research, minute and careful study, most patient elaboration. The more attentively, indeed, we consider Shakespeare the more apparent does it become that, so far from being what the seventeenth and eighteenth century critics supposed, a facile and careless genius who, relying on his natural parts, poured out with impatient spontaneity his masterpieces, he was, in many important respects, one of the most industrious, vigilant and scrupulous of workmen; indifferent, no doubt, about trifles, but solicitous even to fastidiousness about truth to nature, truth to life, and fidelity, in the most comprehensive sense of the term, to the essentials of art.

## VII

### SHAKESPEARE AND MONTAIGNE

**W**AS Shakespeare a reader of Montaigne, and is Montaigne fairly entitled to the honour which M. Philarète Chasles, Herr Stedefeld, Mr. Jacob Feis, Mr. John M. Robertson and other enthusiasts claim for him, the honour of being numbered among the masters and teachers of the greatest of poets? The first question may be answered, unhesitatingly, in the affirmative. Without committing ourselves to any opinion about the genuineness of the famous autograph in Florio's translation of Montaigne, we have one conclusive proof that that translation had been in Shakespeare's hands. It is often a matter of great difficulty to decide when passages, closely resembling each other in different writers, are to be regarded as mere coincidences, or when the similarity is to be set down to conscious or unconscious recollection. Common sense and the ordinary laws of probability are perhaps as good criteria as we can have in these cases. When, for example, we find this description of a commonwealth in one writer :—

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It is a nation, would I answer Plato, that hath no kind of trafficke, no knowledge of Letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of politike superioritie; no use of service, of riches, or of povertie, no contracts, no successions, no partitions, no occupation but idle; no respect of kindred but common, no apparell but naturall, no manuring of lands, no use of wine, corne or metal:

and in another,—

I' the commonwealth I would by contraries  
Execute all things: for no kind of traffic  
Would I admit: no name of magistrate:  
Letters should not be known; no use of service,  
Of riches or of poverty: no contracts,  
Successions; bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none.  
No use of metal, corn or wine or oil;  
No occupation, all men idle, all:

it would be an outrage both to common sense and to the laws of probability to assume that the resemblance between them was the result of mere coincidence. The first of these passages is to be found in Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essays*, published in 1603,<sup>1</sup> and the second is to be found in *The Tempest*,<sup>2</sup> composed almost certainly in or about 1610. With this proof that Shakespeare must have been acquainted with Montaigne's *Essays*, it is not surprising that scholars should have minutely scrutinized the plays to discover other analogies, for the purpose of establishing what, if established, would certainly be a very interesting fact, namely, that the greatest of poets is to be reckoned

<sup>1</sup> Florio's *Montaigne*, Bk. i., ch. 30 of the Caniballes.

<sup>2</sup> *Tempest*, ii. 1.

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among the disciples of the philosopher of Périgord. But, unhappily, this inquiry has been conducted, as such inquiries too often are conducted, not by a sober process of legitimate induction, but by a determination to make facts fit into the framework of a preconceived theory. And the results have been sufficiently startling. M. Philarète Chasles<sup>1</sup> went so far as to say, that not only do we find Montaigne at every corner in *Hamlet*, in *Othello* and in *Coriolanus*, but he attributes the most striking characteristics of Shakespeare's work after 1603 to the influence of the essayist. Montaigne, he contends, transformed the poet into "a thinker" and philosopher, and put him on the track of his great tragedies. Herr Stedefeld<sup>2</sup> insists that Shakespeare was not only profoundly acquainted with Montaigne, but actually wrote *Hamlet* as a sermon against him, as an apotheosis of a practical Christianity, as opposed to the scepticism and cosmopolitanism of the essayist. Mr. Jacob Feis goes further still.<sup>3</sup> He represents Shakespeare as so saturated with Montaigne that Montaigneisms seem to trickle out at every stroke of his pen; the poet is hardly to be

<sup>1</sup> *L'Angleterre au Seizième Siècle*, p. 436.

<sup>2</sup> *Hamlet: ein Tendenzdrama Shakespeers die gegen skeptische und cosmopolitische Weltanschauung des Michael de Montaigne.*

<sup>3</sup> *Shakespeare and Montaigne: An Endeavour to explain the Tendency of Hamlet from allusions in contemporary works.*

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credited with a thought the germ of which is not to be found in the *Essays*. Hamlet, we are told, is to be identified with Montaigne, and the play was written to discredit Montaigne's opinions. Montaigne is, indeed, to Mr. Feis almost what Bacon was to Mr. Donnelly. Mr. Robertson<sup>1</sup> is much more temperate, and, though he rides his hobby-horse with slackened rein, he seldom allows it to run away with him. His book has certainly this merit: he puts his case fairly and fully, and a careful reader will rise from the perusal of his little treatise very well qualified to form an opinion on the real relation of Shakespeare to his supposed master.

That Mr. Robertson, to say nothing of M. Chasles and Mr. Feis, whose contentions are preposterous, has overstated his case, will probably be the conclusion of every impartial judge. It may be said at once that of all the parallel passages adduced there is not one, except that from *The Tempest*, which may not resolve itself into a mere coincidence. Take the supposed original of,—

There's a divinity which shapes our ends,  
Rough hew them how we will

(*Hamlet*, iv. 2);

namely, "My consultation doth somewhat roughly hew the matter, and by its first show lightly consider the same: the main and chief point of

<sup>1</sup> *Montaigne and Shakspeare.*

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the work I am wont to resign to Heaven”;<sup>1</sup> or Hamlet’s phrase (*Hamlet*, iv. 3): “Your worm is your only emperor for diet,” compared with, “The heart and life of a great and triumphant emperor are the dinner of a little worm,” in *The Apologie of Raimond Sebonde*; or the lines in *Lear* (v. 3)—

And take upon’s the mystery of things,  
As if we were God’s spies,

compared with the passage in the same essay about “The interpreters and ordinary controllers of the designs of God, setting about to find the causes of each accident, and to see in the secrets of the Divine will the incomprehensible motives of its works”; or the couplet in *Macbeth*—

Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak,  
Whispers the o’erfraught heart and bids it break,

compared with the *Essay of Sadness* (i. 2), “mournful, silent stupidity, which so doth pierce us when accidents surpassing our strength overwhelm us . . . the soul bursting afterwards forth into tears and complaints . . . seemeth to clear and dilate itself.” Shakespeare’s couplet is, of course, just as likely to have been suggested by the well known line of the *Hippolytus* of Seneca, “Curae leves loquuntur: ingentes stupent,” or by innumerable other parallel passages, or, what is more probable, by Nature herself.

<sup>1</sup> Florio’s *Montaigne*. Of the Art of Conferring, Bk. iii., ch. 8.

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So, too, when Shakespeare writes

There's such divinity doth hedge a king  
That treason can but peep to what it would,  
Acts little of his will

(*Hamlet*, iv. 5);

and we are invited to see a parallel in the following:—

To be a king is a matter of that consequence that only by it he is so. That strange, glimmering, and eye-dazzling light which round about environeth, over-casteth, and hideth from us: our weak sight is thereby bleared and dissipated as being filled and obscured by that greater and further-spreading brightness—<sup>1</sup>

our common sense revolts—*increduli odimus*. It may be added, too, that the lines in Shakespeare are to be found in the First Quarto, and were, therefore, presumably written before the appearance of Florio's *Montaigne*. Nor need anything but a perfectly natural coincidence be assumed when we place side by side the Duke's famous speech in *Measure for Measure* (i. 2): "Thyself and thy belongings," etc., the following in the *Apologie*:—

It is not enough for us to serve God in spirit and soul: we owe Him besides, and we yield unto Him, a corporal worshipping: we apply our limbs, our motions and all external things to honour Him.

Nor is there any real resemblance between Edmund's speech in *Lear*, i. 2, "This is the excellent foppery of the world," etc., and the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. ch. 7.



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passage in the *Essay of Judging of Others' Death*, where Montaigne, commenting on man's vanity, speaks of the delusions

. . . wherewith the world suffers itself to be so easily cony-catched, deeming that our own interests disturb heaven, and his infinity is moved at our least actions. There is no such society between heaven and us that by our destiny the shining of the stars should be as mortal as we are.

The following passages are undoubtedly parallel:—

There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so. (*Hamlet* ii. 1.)

Our good and our evil hath no dependency but from ourselves. (Montaigne, Book i., ch. 50, and cf. the title of Book i., ch. 40.) *That the taste of goods or evils doth greatly depend on the opinion we have of them.*

But such remarks are simply philosophical platitudes. Again:

That monster custom, who all sense doth eat,  
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,  
That to the use of actions fair and good  
He likewise gives a frock, or livery,  
That aptly is put on . . . .  
For use almost can change the stamp of nature '  
(*Hamlet*, iii. 4)

undoubtedly bears a close resemblance to—

Custom doth so blear us that we cannot distinguish the usage of things . . . The laws of conscience which we say are born of nature are born of custom,

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but the remark is perfectly commonplace and obvious.

A far more remarkable parallel is afforded by a passage in *All's Well That Ends Well* (ii. 3).

They say miracles are past : and we have our philosophical persons to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless. Hence is it that we make trifles of errors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.

And Montaigne—

Nothing is so firmly believed as that which a man knoweth least, nor are there people more assured in their reports than such as tell us fables, such as Alchumists, Prognosticators, *et id genus omne*. To which, if I durst, I would join a rabble of men that are ordinarie interpreters and controllers of God's secret desseignes, presuming to find out the causes of everie accident, and to prie into the secrets of God's Divine will, the incomprehensible motives of his works.<sup>1</sup>

But, as we have already seen, the passage bears a still closer resemblance to one of the Fragments of Euripides.<sup>2</sup>

Many other supposed reminiscences absolutely break down. It is quite true, for example, that the word "consummation" in the peculiar sense in which it is employed by Shakespeare, and the phrase "discourse of reason," are to be found in Florio's Montaigne ; but they are to be found also in many other books preceding in date the appearance of that work. Nor is it at all likely that Shakespeare's comments in *Hamlet* and in

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, Bk. i. 31, Florio, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> See *supra*, *Shakespeare as a Classical Scholar*, p. 58.

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*Othello* on the degrading effects of drunkenness originated from any recollection of similar remarks in Montaigne's Essay. Many passages, indeed the majority of those adduced, amount to nothing more than a general resemblance, which, to say the least, is more likely to be accidental than not. Such, for example, is the assumption that the lines in *Hamlet* (iv. 4) :

Rightly to be great  
Is not to stir without great argument,  
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw,  
When honour is at stake,

are a reminiscence of a passage in the essay *Of Repenting*, "The nearest way to come unto glory were to do that for conscience which we do for glory. . . . The worth of the mind consisteth not in going high, but in going orderly: her greatness is not exercised in greatness"; or the assumption that Hamlet's speech, iv. 4—

What is a man  
If his chief good and market of his time  
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.  
Sure he that made us with such large discourse  
Looking before, and after, gave us not  
That capability and god-like reason  
To fust in us unus'd—

was inspired by the passage in the Essay *Of Giving the Lie*—

Since it hath pleased God to endow us with some capacity of discourse, that as beasts we should not servilely be subjected to common laws,

\* \* \* \* \*

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Nature hath endowed us with a large faculty to entertain ourselves apart, and often calleth us unto it to teach us that partly we owe ourselves unto society, but, into the better part, unto ourselves.

There is one thing that the Montaigneists do not take into consideration. It is not pretended that Shakespeare read Montaigne<sup>1</sup> in the original, but only in Florio's version, which was not published till 1603, and to suppose that Shakespeare had access to its manuscript is to suppose what is in the highest degree improbable. What are we to think, then, of the parallels to be found in the plays before 1603, and there are several in the Two Parts of *Henry IV.*, the *Merchant of Venice*, and in *As You Like It*. The truth is, that in a writer so astonishingly fertile as Shakespeare the greatest allowance must be made for coincidences. It would be easy to point out closer and more remarkable analogies in his plays with passages in *Don Quixote* than any which, with one exception, have been pointed out in reference to Montaigne's essays, and those in plays which precede 1605, when the first part of *Don Quixote* first saw the light, and

<sup>1</sup> If Shakespeare composed the scene between Katharine and Alice and the other French speeches in *Henry V.*, he must have been quite competent to read Montaigne in the original, and need not have waited for Florio; but the Montaigneists rely on the *verbal* resemblances, in the passages recalling Montaigne, to Florio's version; on the fact that the passage in the *Tempest* is undoubtedly taken from Florio; and on the fact that Shakespeare chiefly recalls him after the publication of Florio's translation.

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1613, when the second part was published. Take the following. In 1604 Shakespeare was thus writing of actors and acting (*Hamlet*, iii. 2): "Playing, whose end both at the first, and now, was and is, to hold, as it were, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure"; in 1613 Cervantes wrote of plays and players:<sup>1</sup> "Todos son instrumentos de hacer un gran bien á la república, poniéndonos un espejo á cada paso delante, donde se ven al vivo las acciones de la vida humana, y ninguna comparacion hay que mas al vivo nos represente lo que somos y lo que habemos de ser como la comedia y los comediantes"—that is, "they (actors and dramatists) are all instruments of much benefit to the commonweal, setting up at every step a mirror before us from which we see to the life the actions of human life, and there is no comparison which more truly presents to us what we are and what we ought to be than comedy and players." Again, the singular expression in *Lear* (iv. 6), "O indistinguish'd space of woman's will," looks very like a reminiscence of Sancho's remark: "Entre el Si y el No de la muger no me atraveria yo á poner una punta d' alfiler."<sup>2</sup> Cervantes could not have had access

<sup>1</sup> *Don Quixote*, part ii., cap. xii.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, cap. xix., and cf. also Falstaff's soliloquy on honour, so singularly parallel with Sancho Panza's soliloquy, *Id.*, cap. x.

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to Shakespeare's quartos. We think, then, that these and similar parallels prove, in themselves, simply nothing, and that M. Chasles, Mr. Feis, and even Mr. Robertson, have very much weakened their case by attaching so much importance to them.

But it would be doing the Montaigneists great injustice not to admit that, if they have attempted to prove too much, they have at least succeeded in adducing interesting and plausible testimony in favour of their main contention, namely, that Shakespeare was a reader of Montaigne, and that he was to some extent influenced by him. There can be no doubt that during the period intervening between the first and second Quarto of *Hamlet*, that is between 1603 and 1604, Shakespeare was especially attracted by the questions which are Montaigne's favourite themes; that his speculations often took the same ply and colour as Montaigne's; and that his work was intellectually enriched, not so much by what was immediately derived from the *Essays*, and can be indicated by parallel quotations, but by what was suggested by them. It is not fanciful to see in *Hamlet*, a character practically created between 1603 and 1604, the reflection of what the poet's dramatic instinct must have discerned in Montaigne himself. It is not, perhaps, fanciful to see in Horatio and in Horatio's relation to *Hamlet*, as well as in his contrasted personal-

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ity, an analogy to Montaigne's portrait of La Boétie.

Hamlet not only struck a new note in Shakespeare's work as a dramatic artist, but it stands alone among his plays. It is, in relation to its motive and main interest, a purely psychological study, and to that study the whole action of the drama is subordinated. As it was composed immediately after the appearance of Florio's Montaigne the coincidence is at least remarkable.

Again, when we place beside Shakespeare's picture of man, as delineated not only in the famous passage in *Hamlet*, Act ii. 2, but in various passages through the play,<sup>1</sup> the following from the *Apology of Raimond Sebonde*, we see how near we are to Montaigne.

Let us see what hold-fast or free-hold he hath in this gorgeous and goodlie equipage . . . Who hath persuaded him that this admirable moving of heaven's vaults, that the eternal light of these lamps so fiercely rolling over his head . . . were established . . . for his commoditie and service? Is it possible to imagine anything so ridiculous as this miserable and wretched creature, which is not so much as master of himself, exposed and subject to offences of all things? . . . Of alle creatures manne is the most miserable and fraill, and therewithall the proudest and disdainfullest, who perceiveth himself placed here, amidst the filth and mire of the worlde.

Hamlet's description of Horatio (*Hamlet*, iii. 2),

<sup>1</sup> Hamlet's soliloquy, iii. 2: the Player-King's reflections, iii. 2: Hamlet's soliloquy, iv. 4: his reflections in the churchyard, v. 1.

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For thou hast been  
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing :  
A man, that Fortune's buffets and rewards  
Hast ta'en with equal thanks ; and bless'd are those  
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,  
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger  
To sound what stop she please. Give me the man  
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him  
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of hearts,  
As I do thee—

may well be compared with Montaigne's character of la Boëtie, Book ii. ch. 17, as well as with the following passage in Essay xix. :—

She (the soul) is made mistress of her passions and concupiscencies, lady of indigence, of shame, of povertie and of all fortune's injuries. Let him that can, attain to this advantage. Herein consists the true and sovereigne libertie that affords us means wherewith to jest and make a scorn of force and injustice, and to deride imprisonment, gyves, or fetters

—though this is of course the ordinary stoic ideal, . . . and yet dareth imaginarie place himselfe above the circle of the moone, and reduce heaven under his feet. It is through the vanitie of the same imagination that he dare equal himselfe to God.

How much in *Hamlet* expands the following passage in the fortieth Essay of the First Book—

Shall we then dare to say, that this advantage of reason, whereat we seeme so much to reioice, and for whose respect we account ourselves Lords and Emperours of all other creatures, hath bene infused into us for our torment? What availeth the knowledge of thinges, if through them, we become more demisse, if thereby we lose the rest of the tranquillity wherein we should be without them.

. . Shall we employ the intelligence that heaven hath bestowed upon us for our greatest good, to effect our ruin?



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repugning nature's desseigne and the universal order and vicissitude of things, which implieth that everyone should use his instruments and meanes for his own commoditie.

How much both in *Hamlet* and elsewhere expands this <sup>1</sup> passage—

Our religion has had no surer human foundation than the contempt of life. Not only does the course of our reason lead us that way, for why should we feare to lose a thing which, when lost, cannot be regretted? But also, seeing that we are threatened by so many kinds of death, is it not a greater inconvenience to feare them all than to endure one? What does it matter when death comes, since it is inevitable? Moreover nobody dies before his hour. The time you leave behind was no more years than that which was before your birth, and concerns you no more.

If Hamlet's soliloquy, inspired by the contemplation of the army of Fortinbras, was not suggested by the passages cited by Mr. Robertson and Mr. Feis from the *Essays Of Diversion, Of Controlling One's Will, Of Repenting, Of Experience*, all we can say is, that the germs of every reflection in it are to be found in those *Essays*.

But it is in the Duke's speech in *Measure for Measure* that we have a typical illustration of the way in which Shakespeare may have been influenced by Montaigne. It may be well to quote it at length:

Be absolute for death; either death or life  
Shall thereby be the sweeter. Reason thus with life;—  
If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, Bk. i. ch. 40. *That the taste of things does greatly depend on the opinion we have of them.*

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That none but fools would keep; a breath thou art,  
(Servile to all the skiey influences,) That dost this habitation, where thou keep'st,  
Hourly afflict; merely, thou art death's fool;  
For him thou labour'st by thy flight to shun,  
And yet run'st toward him still. Thou art not noble:  
For all the accommodations that thou bear'st,  
Are nurs'd by baseness; Thou art by no means valiant;  
For thou dost fear the soft and tender fork  
Of a poor worm; Thy best of rest is sleep,  
And that thou oft provok'st; yet grossly fear'st  
Thy death which is no more. Thou art not thyself:  
For thou exist'st on many a thousand grains  
That issue out of dust; Happy thou art not;  
For what thou hast not, still thou striv'st to get;  
And what thou hast, forget'st; Thou art not certain;  
For thy complexion shifts to strange effects,  
After the moon; If thou art rich, thou art poor;  
For, like an ass, whose back with ingots bows,  
Thou bear'st thy heavy riches but a journey,  
And death unloads thee; Friend hast thou none;  
For thine own bowels, which do call thee sire,  
The mere effusion of thy proper loins,  
Do curse the gout, serpigo, and the rheum,  
For ending thee no sooner; Thou hast nor youth, nor  
age;  
But, as it were, an after-dinner's sleep,  
Dreaming on both; for all thy blessed youth  
Becomes as aged, and doth beg the alms  
Of palsied eld; and when thou art old, and rich,  
Thou hast neither heat, affection, limb, nor beauty,  
To make thy riches pleasant. What's yet in this,  
That bears the name of life? Yet in this life  
Lie hid more thousand deaths; yet death we fear,  
That makes these odds all even.

Now compare the following from the Essay  
*That to studie Philosophie, is to learne how to die.*

The end of our career is death; it is the necessarie

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object of our aime; if it affright us, how is it possible that we should step one foot further without an ague? <sup>1</sup>

There is no evill in life for him that hath well conceived how the privation of life is no evill. <sup>2</sup>

When youth fails in us, we feele, nay we perceive, no shaking or transchange at all in ourselves; which in essence and veritie is a harder death than that of a languishing and irksome life, or that of age. For so much as the leape from an ill being unto a not being is not so dangerous or steepie as it is from a delightful and flourishing being unto a painful and sorrowfull condition. A weake, bending, and faint, stopping, body hath lesse strength to beare and undergoe a heavie burden: So hath our soule. <sup>3</sup>

Death is a part of yourselves; you fly from yourselves. The being you enjoy is equally shared between life and death. . . . The continual work of your life is to contrive death; you are in death during the time you continue in life . . . during life you are still dying. <sup>4</sup>

So again, when we place beside Isabel's remark, *Measure for Measure*, iii. 1—

Dar'st thou die?

The sense of death is most in apprehension;  
And the poor beetle, that we tread upon,  
In corporal sufferance feels as great a pang  
As when a giant dies—

### Montaigne's

Death is felt by discourse, because it is the emotion of an instant <sup>5</sup>—

we have a parallel remark, but it is parallel in truism: still the whole *Essay* should be compared,

<sup>1</sup> Florio's *Montaigne*, 3rd ed., 1632, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> *Essay* xl., Bk. i. Florio, p. 130.

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and it is in the comparison of the whole that signification may possibly lie.

Of the resemblance of these passages and of many others which could be cited from Montaigne to passages in *Measure for Measure*, and in others of Shakespeare's plays, there can, of course, be no question. But we must remember that there is nothing in them which is not to be found in Lucretius, in Cicero, in Seneca and in Plutarch, and which had been filtered from them into innumerable works popular among thoughtful people in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Montaigne's *Essays* are in truth almost as much a cento of philosophical commonplaces as Burton's *Anatomy* is of quotations; so that in discussing the question of his possible influence on Shakespeare we must guard against laying too much stress on parallel passages.

Making, however, all due allowance for what the relegation of this testimony to a place of secondary importance must discount, it is not improbable that Shakespeare's speculations and reflections may, to some extent, have been inspired, and to some extent have been coloured and influenced by Montaigne. That he was acquainted with the *Essays* is, as we have seen, certain, and they could hardly have failed to attract and interest him greatly. Of their popularity among his contemporaries, there can be no doubt. Bacon, as his frequent quotations from them show, knew them intimately, and

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Ben Jonson, in a well known passage which may possibly be numbered among his many ill-natured glancings at Shakespeare, speaks of "authors" stealing from them.<sup>1</sup>

The creator of Falstaff, of Jacques, and of Duke Vincentio, must have recognized a kindred spirit in one of the most humorous of philosophers and one of the most philosophical of humorists, and it may have been that, with a genius stimulated, and even enriched, by the author of the *Apology of Raimond Sebonde* he went on with the creation of Hamlet, and of Vincentio, or, at all events, made them the mouthpieces of his own meditative fancies. But we must guard against the old fallacy of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. Intellectually there was much in common between Shakespeare and Montaigne. In each a subtle and restless wit delighting in nice distinctions, in paradox, in casuistry, sought naturally the themes which would call it into play, and afford it scope. To each, the riddles of life, the relation of reason to truth, of free will to necessity, of humanity to the divine, of fancy to fact, had the deepest attraction, and both accepted with perfect equanimity, for both were humorists, the absolute insolubility of the problems

<sup>1</sup> *Volpone*, Act iii. 2. Referring to the *Pastor Fido* he makes Lady Politick say—

All our English authors,  
I mean such as are happy in the Italian,  
Will deign to steal out of this author mainly,  
Almost as much as from Montaigne.

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which fascinated them. In both there was a certain timidity of temper. Both abhorred dogmatism, and both, to all appearance, delighted in chafing its upholders. Their religious opinions and their attitude towards orthodoxy are exactly identical. Both are, practically, theistical agnostics, but both reverence, and for the same formal reasons, Christianity, the one as embodied in Roman Catholicism, the other as embodied in Protestantism.<sup>1</sup>

The true nature of Shakespeare's indebtedness to Montaigne may be fairly estimated if we say what, we believe, may be said with truth, that had the *Essays* never appeared there is nothing to warrant the assumption that what he has in common with Montaigne would not have been equally conspicuous.

<sup>1</sup> For Shakespeare see his dramas *passim*, but especially *King John* and *Henry VIII.*; for Montaigne see particularly the *Essays on Prayers and Orisons* (Book i. lvi.), also *Essay xxxi. Bk. i.*; and the *Apology of Raimond Sebonde*, throughout.

## VIII

### THE TEXT AND PROSODY OF SHAKESPEARE <sup>1</sup>

THIS work is an elaborate and solid contribution to verbal criticism in its application to the texts of Shakespeare and of his contemporaries. Few people are aware of the great difficulties involved in the settlement of these texts and more especially in the settlement of Shakespeare's text. In the first place, we are almost entirely ignorant of the exact pronunciation of Elizabethan English. We have to deal with phraseology absolutely indeterminate and unfixèd; with a grammar so anomalous as to be irreducible to system; with a prosody the laws of which can often only be conjectured, or ascertained by dubious inference; and with an orthography so purely capricious that it is by no means uncommon to find the same word spelt

<sup>1</sup> *William Shakespeare. Prosody and Text. An Essay in Criticism, being an Introduction to a better Editing and a more adequate Appreciation of the Works of the Elizabethan Poets.* By A. P. Van Dam, with the assistance of C. Stoffel. London: Williams and Norgate. 1900. 15s. net.

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in two or three different ways on the same page, and even in the same line. Within an assignable limit, says Dr. Ingleby, we may rest assured that every compositor in a printing house spelt pretty much as seemed good in his own eyes. The consequence of this has been that editors have frequently altered the text of Shakespeare as it stands in the quartos and in the First Folio, where there was not only no necessity for altering it, but where alteration seriously affects the rhythm, and even the sense. In some cases this has been the result of ignorance of the ancient inflexions. In the *Comedy of Errors* (v. 1, 69) for example we find—

The venom *clamours* of a jealous woman  
Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth,

and in *Hamlet* (iii. 214-15)—

The great man down, you mark his *favourites flies*,  
The poor advanced makes friends of enemies,"

where, in the first passage, the editors have almost universally altered "poisons" into "poison," and in the second, "flies" into "fly," under the impression that they were correcting obvious grammatical errors, whereas the text was perfectly right, the "s" being the old plural inflection. And this in spite of the fact that the alteration of the plural in "s" destroys rhymes as in the passage just quoted, and in *Macbeth* (ii. 1, 60-1)—



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Whilst I threat he *lives*,  
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath *gives*.

And in *Romeo and Juliet*, ii. 3—

Both our *remedies*  
Within thy help and holy physic *lies*.

So again in *The Merchant of Venice* (iii. 2, 270), “*Hath* all his ventures failed?” has been altered into “have,” whereas “*hath*” is the correct reading, being the old plural.

Dozens of impertinent emendations have been introduced into Shakespeare’s text, because editors have not been aware that the custom of using the same word in different senses in one line, or even twice in contiguous lines, however repugnant to a modern ear, was deliberately affected by the Elizabethan poets. Thus, in *Othello*, ii. 1, we have—

If this poor *trash* of Venice, whom I *trash*  
For his quick hunting.

In the *Comedy of Errors* (i. 1)—

To seek thy *help* by artificial *help*.

And in *Henry V.* (v. 5. 1)

To England will I *steal* and there I’ll *steal*.

In *Cymbeline* iii. 4—

Why *tender*’st thou that paper to me with  
A look *untender*.

And in *Coriolanus* (iii. 1)—

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I'll go to him and undertake to bring him *peace*,  
Where he shall answer by a lawful form,  
*In peace*, to his own peril.

We may, therefore, be perfectly certain that the First Folio reading of the line in *Macbeth* which editors have always suspected, namely,—

Cleanse the *stuff'd* bosome of the perilous *stuffe*  
Which weighes upon the heart (v. 3)—

is what Shakespeare wrote. It is, indeed, always perilous to alter a reading which we find in the original copies, that is in the quartos or in the First Folio, however erroneous that reading may at first sight appear to be. Let us take one or two examples. In the First Folio text of *Julius Caesar* (i. 3) we find—

Against the Capitol I met a lyon  
Who *glaz'd* upon me, and went surly by.

All the editors, without exception we believe, have assumed that this is an obvious misprint, either for “glar'd” as Pope corrected, or “gaz'd” as Johnson corrected, and have so altered the text. And yet “glaz'd” is certainly the right reading, “glaze” or “glaize” being a word not yet obsolete,<sup>1</sup> meaning “a steady stare,” as we learn from James I's version of the *Urania* of Du Bartas—

I gave a lustie *glaize*  
For to descryne the Troian Kings of old (13-14).

<sup>1</sup> See *New English Dictionary*, *sub verb.*, which, however, explains the word, as used by James I, differently.

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Again in *Coriolanus* (iv. 5. 238) it is said of war that it is "spritely, waking, audible, and *full of vent*." Here the puzzled editors have supposed that "full of *vent*" must be a misprint for "full of *vaunt*," and so, in innumerable editions of Shakespeare, we find it printed. But "vent" is perfectly right. It is a technical term for hunting; "vent" meaning to scent the game, and so "full of vent" means full of the excitement caused by the scent of the game. Thus we find in the old poem *The Blazon of the Hart*—

And when my hound doth straine upon the *vent*.

It is exactly what Shakespeare has elsewhere so graphically expressed in *Henry V.* (iii. 1, 31-2), where he represents the King saying to his soldiers:—

I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,  
Straining upon the start.

By altering therefore the word full of *vent* into full of *vaunt* a splendidly vivid image is transformed into tame commonplace. From the same ignorance of technical terms in hunting, a word in *Troilus and Cressida* has been unnecessarily altered—

O, these encounterers, so glib of tongue,  
That give a *coasting* welcome ere it comes (iv. 5, 58-9);

where the reading almost universally adopted is "accosting." But the original word is perfectly right, being a term from coursing, a

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well known source of many of Shakespeare's metaphors. Turbervile in his *Noble Art of Venerie or Hunting* has—

In coursing at the hare it is not material which dog kylleth her . . . but he that giveth most Cotes, or most turnes winneth the wager. A Cote is when a greyhound goeth endwayes by his fellow and giveth the hare a turn, . . . but if he *coast*, and so come by his fellow, that is no Cote.<sup>1</sup>

So that to give a “coasting welcome, ere it comes” is to move alongside of a welcome, or meet it, before it comes. The same word and the same metaphor occurs in *Venus and Adonis* (870)—

And all in haste she *coasteth* to the cry.

In the *Merry Wives of Windsor* another metaphor from hunting having been missed, the text has been altered. The host says to Dr. Caius (ii. 3):—

I will bring thee where Mistress Anne Page is at a Farm-house a-feasting, and thou shalt wooe her: *Crیده-game*, said I well?

For this has been substituted “Cried I aim?” But Dr. Ingleby has shown that the allusion is to hare-hunting where a person was employed and paid to find the hare. When he had found her, he first cried “Soho,” to betray the fact to her pursuers, and then “gave her coursers law,” so that “crیده game” is simply “cried I, ‘game.’” “Did I cry Soho?” Anne Page is the hare, and

<sup>1</sup> P. 248 (Ed. 1611).

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the host is discovering her whereabouts to Caius. "Cried I aim?" wholly misses the allusion, and deprives the phrase of its point.

Ignorance of Elizabethan phraseology and idiom is responsible for many other of these impertinent alterations, too many of which are to be found in the "Globe" text. Thus, in the *Tempest* (i. 2), where we read in the First Folio,

A noble Neapolitan Gonzalo  
Out of his charity (who being then appointed  
Master of this designe) did give us, etc.,

the "who" has been struck out, though the construction is perfectly Shakespearean, having a parallel in the same scene (100-3) as well as in *Love's Labour's Lost* (i. 1, 82-3) and in *King John* (ii. 571-3). In the same play we have another instance (v. 158-60).

A solemn ayre, and the best comforter  
To an unsettled fancy Cure thy braines  
(Now uselesse) boile within thy skull.

This has been almost universally altered, and so converted into a grotesquely comical expression, by substituting Pope's "boiled," simply because of the omission of the relative "which" before "boile," one of the commonest peculiarities of Elizabethan English.<sup>1</sup> So, too, in *As You Like It* (iii. 5), where Silvius is appealing to

<sup>1</sup> For abundant and precisely parallel illustrations see Abbot's *Shakespearian Grammar*, sect. 244, and Ingleby's *Shakespeare Hermeneutics*, p. 70.

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Phœbe, after saying that the very executioner asks pardon of his victim, he exclaims :—

Will you sterner be  
Than he that *dies and lives* by bloody drops ?

This greatly puzzled the editors, several of whom printed “live and die” till Mr. Arrow-smith, in *Notes and Queries* (1st series, vii. 542), pointed out that the phrase “die and live” was a common idiomatic hysteron-proteron in Shakespeare’s time. Again in *2 Henry IV.* (iv. 1), the line—

To a loud trumpet and *a point of war*,

ignorance of the meaning and existence of the phrase “a point of war,” led to the substitution of “a report of war.”

In his quaint and learned treatise *Shakespeare Hermeneutics, or The Still Lion*, Ingleby has given ample illustrations of the danger of tampering with the text of the Quartos and First Folio, pointing out how often what appears to be unintelligible, and what has, therefore, been altered by editors, only awaits complete investigation to justify and interpret. Of this there is a very striking example in *Hamlet*. In Act ii. sc. 2, Hamlet says to Rosencrantz, referring to the players, “The lover shall not sigh *gratis*, the humorous man shall end his part in peace : the Clowne shall make those laugh whose lungs are *tickled a’ th’ sere*.” Till a few years ago the expression remained the despair of commenta-

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tors. Warburton cut the knot by omitting it, merely observing that it was the reading of the First Folio. Malone proposed to substitute "scene" for "sere," and to explain "o'" by "by." Steevens supposed that sere meant *serum*, in the medical sense of the term, phlegm, and interpreted it as meaning "those who are asthmatical and to whom laughing is most uneasy." Some, among them, Douce, resorted to another meaning of "sere," namely withered or dry. "Every one," says Douce,<sup>1</sup> "has felt that dry tickling in the throat and lungs which excites coughing; Hamlet's meaning may be, therefore, the clown by his merriment shall convert their coughing into laughter." Many commentators either gave it up, or inclined to Malone's conjecture. Ingleby himself, rejecting Malone's "scene," and adopting Staunton's "tickle" for "tickled" got, with Steevens' aid, on the right track. Steevens, though not knowing what to do with it, had noticed something which seemed to approach a parallel in the *Tempest*, and with the words "Will the following passage in the *Tempest* (ii. 1) be of any use to commentators?" quoted it:

I do well believe your Highnesse, and did it to minister occasion to these gentlemen, who are of such sensible and nimble lungs that they always used to laugh at nothing.

With this passage, and Staunton's "tickle" for "tickled" to help him, Ingleby explained that

<sup>1</sup> *Illustrations of Shakespeare*, vol. ii. p. 230.

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the words "whose lungs are tickle o' the sere" should be of the same meaning as "whose lungs are sensible (i.e. sensitive) and nimble," that is, easily made to explode in laughter"; but this left "sere" unexplained. At last, in 1871, Dr. Brinsley Nicholson came to the rescue. "Sere" or "serre," or as it is now spelt "sear" or "schar," is the catch in a gunlock which keeps the hammer on full or half cock, and is released by the trigger. So Lombard, as quoted in Halliwell's *Archaic Dictionary*, "Even as a pistole, that is ready charged and bent, will flie off by and by (i.e. immediately), if a man do but touch the seare." This was confirmed by the Cambridge editors, who quoted a passage from Barret's *Theorike and Practike of Modern Warres* (1598). It is curious that Douce should have quoted a passage from *Howard's Defensative against the Poyson of Supposed Prophecies*, which gave him the key, though he failed to see it,—“discovering the moods and humours of the vulgar to be so *loose and tickle of the seare.*”

We have, in the *Winter's Tale* (ii. 1) another instance of a word which had to wait many generations for explanation. "Would I knew the villane, I would *land-damme* him." Fortunately it was not altered, though Farmer seriously proposed to substitute "*laudanum* him"! while Hanmer explained it still more ludicrously, but too indecently for citation here.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Variorum Shakespeare*, *ad loc.*



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The danger, therefore, of tampering with the text of the First Folio, and with that of the quartos where they exist, is very great. Dr. Ingleby quaintly compares them to a "still lion thrilling with life, but often dissembling his vitality"; and of this he gives many most interesting illustrations, on some of which I have drawn.

But if we turn to that text and the history of its formation, it is not surprising that succeeding editors should have had little scruple in making very free with it. Of the thirty-six plays included in the First Folio nineteen had, with one exception, *Othello*, appeared during Shakespeare's lifetime. But they were all of them publishers' ventures, printed, almost certainly, without the co-operation, or without the sanction of the poet. His friends Heminge and Condell, who acted as his literary executors, describe them, indeed, as "stolne and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious impostors." In 1623, seven years after his death, Heminge and Condell published a collected edition of his dramas "according," as it is stated on the title-page, "to the true and originall copies." After regretting that the author had not himself lived to "set forth and oversee" the publication, they go on to say that those plays which had already been printed were now "cured and perfected of their limbs, and all the rest"—that is, the seventeen

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which had not been printed before, were "absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them." In a very memorable clause they also imply that they had used the poet's own manuscripts, their words being: "his mind and hand went together, and what he thought he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers." How far in this all-important remark they were speaking the truth, and, assuming it to be true, to what extent and in what dramas, they availed themselves of the manuscripts, it is now impossible to say. In any event, it is all but certain that the plays were printed, in some cases, from the quartos more or less corrected, in other cases, from stage copies in the possession of the manager of Shakespeare's company. Of the manner in which Heminge and Condell discharged their duties as editors, and of the manner in which the compositors and correctors for the press did their work it is impossible to speak too severely. Hunter scarcely exaggerated when he said that, in the whole annals of typography, there is no record of any book of importance having been dismissed from the press with less care and attention.<sup>1</sup> Words, the restitution of which is obvious, left unsupplied; unfamiliar words transliterated into gibberish; punctuation as it pleases chance; sentences with the subordinate clauses higgledy-piggledy or

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *New Illustrations of Shakespeare* p. 4.

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upside down ; lines transposed ; verse printed as prose and prose as verse ; erroneous reiterations of letters, syllables, words, and even of whole lines ; speeches belonging to one character given to another ; stage directions incorporated in the text ; actors' names suddenly substituted for those of the *dramatis personae* ; scenes and acts unindicated, or indicated wrongly ; one whole drama omitted from the index and unpagged—all this and much more make the text of the First Folio one of the most portentous specimens of typography and editing in existence. And yet it must be remembered that this is the only authentic text, the nearest approach, probably, which it is possible to get to what Shakespeare wrote. In the case of nineteen<sup>1</sup> of the plays we have, indeed, quartos, but we know that those quartos were pirated and surreptitious, and we have the assurance of the poet's friends and editors that they are not to be trusted. They must stand, then, on their own merits. If the text of the Folio spells nonsense, makes havoc of prosody, or is plainly defective, and their text makes sense, is sound in prosody and supplies what is wanted, we must obviously prefer, or resort to it. We may go further : where there can be no question about the superiority of the reading of the quartos to that of the Folio it may be safely adopted. There can, for example, be no doubt

<sup>1</sup> Counting *Pericles* we must say twenty, but *Pericles* was not included in the First or even the Second Folio.

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about which reading is to be preferred in *Lear* ii. 4—

Infect her beauty,  
You Fensuck'd fogges, drawn by the powerful sun  
To fall *and blister* ;

or the reading of the quartos—

To fall and *blast her pride* ;

or again in *Richard III.*, ii. 4, 65—

Or let me die to look on *earth* no more ;

or the quartos—

Or let me die to look on *death* no more ;

and these are typical of scores of passages. The quarto texts of *Love's Labour's Lost*, of *Richard II.*, and of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, where they differ from that of the Folio almost invariably differ for the better. Both *Hamlet* and *Lear* must frequently be supplemented from the quartos ; for, in the first, as it appears in the First Folio, some two hundred and fifty lines found in the second quarto, and in *Lear* some three hundred lines found in the two quartos, have been excised, and that the excised lines are from Shakespeare's hand is as certain as anything which internal evidence can warrant.<sup>1</sup> But beyond that we are surely not justified

<sup>1</sup> The respective relation of the text of the quartos and of the First Folio to the text of Shakespeare's autograph is the most fascinating, but the most hopeless, problem in Shakespearean study. What seems certain is, that in some, probably in many, cases, demonstrably so in *Much Ado about Nothing*, the text of the First Folio is simply that of

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in going. In the Folio, and in the Folio alone, we have our best, indeed our only chance, of getting at what the poet actually wrote. We should regard it, therefore, and treat it as Porson tells us he regarded and treated the Editio Princeps of Euripides—"summâ cum religione, ne dicam superstitione."<sup>1</sup> We should cling as closely to it as we can, and never, without adequate reason, depart from it.

If the history of the corruption of what came from Shakespeare's pen is to be traced, in the first instance, to the scandalous negligence with which Heminge and Condell performed their task, it is to be traced also to the efforts which were subsequently made to repair that negligence. Each of the three folios which succeeded

one of the quartos occasionally corrected by Heminge and Condell from some manuscript, probably prompters' copies in the possession of the Theatre. But despair begins when we ask:—Are we nearer to the poet's text in the quartos than in the First Folio? To what extent are we witnessing successive stages in his work in the first and second quartos of *Romeo and Juliet* and of *Hamlet*, and in the quartos of *Henry V.* and *The Merry Wives* as compared with their revision in the First Folio? Are the excisions in *Hamlet* and *Lear* to be attributed to the poet's own hand, or are they merely stage "cuts" in the prompter's copy? What are we to think of the relation of the 1597 and 1598 quartos of *Richard III.* to the text as it appears in the First Folio? One thing is quite certain—that, in the case of plays, the quartos of which exist, no satisfactory text can be constructed independently, either on that of the quartos or on that of the First Folio, but must be based on a collation of both.

<sup>1</sup> *Monitum ad Medeam.*

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the first, while amending, added to the corruptions. To the eighteenth century editors, particularly to Theobald, Capell, Steevens, and Malone, our debt is, in different ways, incalculable, and it is, indeed, owing to them that we have a smooth and intelligible text. But the very means which enabled them to achieve so much became a new source of mischief, for with them began the custom of conjectural emendation. In their hands, speaking generally, this necessary but dangerous expedient was legitimately employed. The texts, as they found them, teemed with passages which could only be rendered intelligible by resorting to it. But its abuse soon began. With some of the nineteenth century editors and commentators it became little less than mania. Its climax was reached in the impertinences of the Collier-Perkins Folio and of Sidney Walker's *Critical Examination of the Text of Shakespeare*. To critics of this school it is not a question of the restoration of corrupt, or the elucidation of obscure passages, it is not even a question of what Shakespeare wrote, but how, in their opinion, he ought to have written. They simply substitute themselves for the poet; the measure of their own taste and intelligence is the measure to which he is to be reduced. In this detestable practice many scores of scribblers have, during the last fifty years been engaged, not with any honest desire to contribute to the elucidation

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of Shakespeare, but simply with the hope of scrambling cheaply into notoriety. It is, in truth only another form of that vanity which finds expression in the names scrawled on the walls of historical houses; and it is very much to be regretted that the Cambridge editors should have encouraged the production of such inanities by recording them in an important edition of the poet's works.

But to return. As the text of the First Folio is, with all its deficiencies, the only authentic text we have, our nearest approach, presumably, to what Shakespeare actually wrote, it surely follows that that text should be retained, except when alteration is imperatively required, or the text of the quartos is plainly preferable. Let us take some examples from current texts of mere impertinences, the substitution of which is, in various degrees, for the worse and even absurd.

In *Macbeth* (i. 3) the Folio reads :—

*As thick as Tale*  
Can (came) post with post,

that is, as fast as the messengers could be counted they came, a phrase peculiarly Shakespearean in its pregnant condensation; this is transformed into bald commonplace by the substitution of

*As thick as hail.*

In *The Tempest* (i. 2)—

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They all have met againe,  
And are upon the Mediterranean flote  
Bound sadly home for Naples,

has been converted into flat prose by substituting "all" for "are," and turning "flote" into a verb.

In *All's Well that Ends Well* (i. 1)—

When virtue's *steely* bones  
Look bleak in the cold wind,

it has been proposed to alter into "seely" or "silly."

In *King John* (iv. 4)—

For I do see the cruell pangs of death  
Right in thy eye,

"right" may be a little awkward, but "riot," which is proposed instead of it, ruins the rhythm.

In the famous passage in the *Tempest* (iv. 1) the magnificently graphic

Leave not a *rack* behind

has been altered by some into "track," by others into "wreck," with Lucan's "*ipsae periere ruinae*," cited triumphantly in support of the last; while "little" life in the following line has been turned into "brittle" life. It may be noticed in passing that the principle on which this last alteration has been made, namely, the reduction of Shakespearean imagery to symmetrical consistency is responsible



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for other emendations, such as the substitution of "May of life" for "way of life" in *Macbeth* (v. 2), and "bay" for "day" in *Hamlet* (v. 1)—

The cat will mew and dogge will have his *day*.

But symmetry and consistency in imagery, so far from being a characteristic note of Shakespeare's style, is diametrically opposed to it. The day is probably passed when such emendations as Warburton's—

I'll speak a prophecy *or two before I go*

for

I'll speak a prophecy or e'er I go

in *Lear* (ii. 3); or his

Fear-spersing fife

for "ear-piercing fife" in *Othello* (iii. 8); or Pope's

I have retired me to a *lonely room*

for

I have retyr'd me to a *wasteful cocke*  
(*Timon*, ii. 2);

or his alteration, in spite of the rhyme, of "teen" into "anguish" in *Richard III.* (iv. 2)—

And each houres joye wrackt with a weeke of teene,  
—would be tolerated in any edition. Coleridge

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was probably joking when he proposed to read in *Macbeth* (i. 5)—

Nor heaven peep through the *blank height* of the dark  
for “blanket of the dark”; but Staunton was quite serious when in *Macbeth*, ii. 2—

This my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the Greene one, Red,

he proposed “making the green *zone* red.” This passage is, we may notice in passing, a typical example of the licence which absurd punctuation in the original text has given to unnecessary alteration. All that is needed is, not to substitute with Ingleby “their” for “the” in the second line, but simply to remove the comma after “one,” “one red,” “one” being of course emphatic, “total gules.” The separation of letters is all that is required to restore sense in many cases, as in *Henry V* (iv. 3)—

Mark then *abounding* valour in these English,  
where, as the context shows, the separation of the “a,” “a bounding valour,” sets all right; or in *Midsummer Night's Dream* (iv. 1) where the nonsensical “Fairies begone and be *alwaies* away” is turned into sense by simply reading “all ways.”

Even in the most conservative texts unnecessary deviations from the Folio, often greatly for the worse, are much too common.

With emendations which, though not needed, are or appear to be, improvements, no devout

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Shakespearean can have any tolerance. Their ingenuity may surprise and amuse, but under no circumstances should they be admitted into the text. To make grammatical what is ungrammatical; to smoothe the tangled sleeve of Shakespearean expression by modernizing it; to point what is not pointed; to invest a phrase, or idea, with novelty by giving it a turn never intended by the poet—all these are not legitimate exercises. No doubt in *Macbeth* (iii. 6)—

Men must not walk too late  
Who cannot want the thought, how monstrous,  
It was for Malcolm and for Donalbain  
To kill their gracious father

is not only much smoother, to say nothing of its getting rid of a grammatical difficulty, than—

Men must not walk too late.  
Who cannot want the thought how monstrous  
It was for Malcolm and for Donaldbain  
To kill their gracious father?

and yet no one can doubt that Shakespeare wrote the second. When it was proposed to substitute in *As You Like It* (ii. 7) for

Seeking the *bubble* reputation  
Ev'n in the cannon's mouth,

“bauble,” on the plea that bubbles are not sought in cannons' mouths, we recognize the reasonableness of the objection, but we *feel* that Shakespeare wrote “bubble,” just as he

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spoke in *Hamlet* (iii. 1) of "taking arms against a sea of troubles."

And now let us turn to conjecture in its legitimate sphere. To begin with single words. When we consider such corrections as the following we feel instinctively that they are not so much conjectures as restorations—

O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet *South*  
That breathes upon a bank of violets,  
Stealing and giving odour

(*Twelfth Night*, i. 1),

for *sound* ;

With Tarquin's ravishing *strides*, towards his design  
Moves like a ghost

(*Macbeth*, ii. 1),

for *sides*, which we owe to Pope ;

Like to a vagabond flag upon the stream,  
Goes too and back, *lacquying* the varying tide  
To rot itself with motion

(*Ant. and Cleo.*, i. 4),

for *lacking* ;

An *Autumn* 'twas  
That grew the more by reaping

(*Id.*, v. 3),

for *Anthonie* 'twas ;

Ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air  
And dedicate his beauty to the sun

(*Rom. and Jul.*, i. 2),

for *the same* ;

And buzz lamented *dolings* in the air

(*Titus Andronicus*, iii. 2),

for *doings*, which with scores of others equally felicitous we owe to Theobald.

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So too—

Will these *moss'd* trees  
That have outlived the eagle page thy heels?  
(*Timon*, iv. 3),

for *moist*;

And Hound or Spaniell, Brache or *Lym*  
(*Lear*, iii. 6),

for the nonsensical *Hym* of the quartos and Folio; “*lym*” being the Elizabethan name for a bloodhound,—which are two of Hanmer’s few happy hits. Equally certain is Rowe’s—

All plumed like estridges that *wing* the wind  
(1 *Henry IV.* iv. 1)

for the unintelligible *with* of the Folio. And Tyrwhitt’s happy emendation of *Midsummer Night’s Dream* (ii. 1, 109–111)—

And on old Hiem’s *chin* and icy crown  
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer-ends  
Is, as in mockery, set,

where *thin* is the certain correction.

Of desperate corruptions happily restored we may cite with unqualified admiration the following: First comes Theobald’s immortal flash of inspired intuition. Finding in *Henry V.* (ii. 3) in the account of Falstaff’s death “for his nose was as sharp as a pen-knife *and a Table of greene fields*,”—gibberish omitted by Pope, who could only explain it by supposing that a stage direction had been foisted into the text, Theobald transmuted it into “a’ babbled of green

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fields." To Pope and Johnson we owe a singularly happy restoration in *Timon of Athens* (i. 1)—

Our Poesie is a *gumme*, which oozes  
From whence 'tis nourisht,

for "a *gowne* which *uses*," Pope restoring the "gumme" and Johnson the "oozes."

To Walker we owe the restoration of

Her *insuite comming* with her modern grace  
(*All's Well that Ends Well*, v. 2),

by the substitution of "infinite cunning," though this is perhaps doubtful, and not very happy.

We may accept Singer's correction of the obscure clause in *Julius Caesar* (iii. 1):—

To you our swords have leaden points, Mark Antony,  
Our armes *in strength of malice* and our hearts  
. . . Do receive you in,

by substituting "strength of amity," because in ii. 6 of the same play we have "the strength of their amity," and the word occurs more than once in Shakespeare. Another most happy, and probably certain, correction was Warburton's in *Hamlet* (ii. 2)—

For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a *god* kissing carrion,

for the unintelligible "good kissing carrion" of the Folio and quartos. It is, however, just possible that the original reading may be sound, and that it may mean "good in point of kiss-

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ing," that is worth kissing; the expression "too hard a keeping oath" in *Love's Labour's Lost* (i. 1, 65) being quoted in support of this interpretation. In the desperate passage in 1 *Henry IV.* (i. 1)—

No more the thirsty *entrance* of this soil  
Shall daub her lips with her own children's blood,

we may feel almost sure that Monk Mason's brilliant conjecture "Erinnys" restores the right word; for "Erinnys" is of frequent occurrence in Elizabethan poetry, and is just the sort of word that printers would be certain to stumble over, while the confused use of the pronoun "her" is exactly in Shakespeare's manner.

Among less successful attempts to amend what awaits, or seems to await emendation are Singer's:—

Till that the *wearer's* very means do ebb,  
for

Till that the *wearie* verie meanes do ebbe  
(*As You Like It*, ii. 7);

or Capell's solution of the knot in *Antony and Cleopatra* (v. 2, 50-51)—

If idle talk will once be necessary  
I'll not *sleepe* neither,

by substituting "speake" for "sleepe."

Several desperate attempts have been made to set right the well known passage in the *Tempest* (iii. 1)—

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I forget :

But these sweet thoughts doe even refresh my labours,  
*Most busy lest*, when I do it.

Of all these, we quite agree with Dr. Ingleby, that Mr. Bullock's is the best, who reads "busiliest," a superlative on the analogy of "easiliest," misprinted, it should be noted, "easilest" in *Cymbeline* (iv. 2), and who thus punctuates and explains—

I forget (i.e. am forgetting my injunction) :  
But these sweet thoughts, etc.,  
Most busiliest when I do it (i.e. do forget it).

The double superlative, of course, requires no illustration. With the corruption evidently lurking in *Much Ado* (v. 1, 16-17)—

If such a one will smile and stroke his beard,  
*And sorrow, wagge, cry hem, when he should grone,*

no one has as yet satisfactorily grappled. Nor have editors been more successful with the opening lines of *Cymbeline*—

You do not meet a man but frownes :  
Our bloods no more obey the Heavens  
Then our courtiers :  
Still seem as do's the Kings.

or with the *crux* in the *Winter's Tale* (ii. 1, 134)—

If it prove  
Shee's otherwise, Ile keep my Stables where  
I lodge my wife. Ile goe in couples with her :  
Then when I feelle and see her, no farther trust her.

In all these cases, and in many others which might be cited, conjectural emendation is not



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only legitimate but indispensable. Its abuse begins when it is not needed.

Messrs. Van Dam and Stoffel roundly accuse the editors of importing more corruptions into the text than they have corrected, and plead eloquently for a restoration—and they think it in a great degree possible—of what Shakespeare wrote. A minute comparative scrutiny of the quartos and of the First Folio has satisfied them that they were printed from Shakespeare's manuscripts; that, in the case of *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *First Part of Henry IV.*, *Merchant of Venice* and *Much Ado about Nothing*, the First Folio is simply a reprint of the quartos, and that the quartos were printed from the manuscripts; that, in the case of *Titus Andronicus*, *Richard II.*, *Richard III.*, the *Second Part of Henry IV.*, *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Othello* and *Troilus and Cressida*, both the printers of the quartos as well as the printers of the First Folio had full or partial access to the genuine manuscripts. They are, therefore, of opinion that Heminge and Condell were not quite honest in what they said with reference to the quartos, as in the case of six plays they simply reprinted them from the quartos, the manuscripts being probably lost.<sup>1</sup> The causes of corruption in the quartos and in the Folio, in other words of Shakespeare's manuscripts, they analyse into differences

<sup>1</sup> See their work, chapters xiv.-xvi.

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in spelling; misprints; line-shiftings—that is the mangling of verse by subjecting the individual lines to arbitrary processes of shortening or lengthening while leaving intact the words of which the lines are made up; punctuation; textual differences—that is arbitrary alterations and omissions; and, lastly, additions.

All this was facilitated by the fact, that authors, as a rule, seldom corrected their own proofs—Shakespeare most certainly did not, except, perhaps, in the case of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*; that the reader for the press seldom consulted the manuscript in correcting proofs; that the compositors spelt and punctuated at discretion, and dealt with copy pretty much as they pleased, omitting or altering what they could not decipher, printing prose as verse or verse as prose, and, in short, taking every liberty which ignorance or carelessness can assume. If, in addition to the corruptions thus imported originally into the text, we add the corruptions contributed by modern regulators of it, we may have some idea of the difficulty of recovering what Shakespeare wrote. Still Messrs. Van Dam and Stoffel do not despair. We entirely agree with them that a much nearer approximation to an authentic text might be made than has, as yet, been made, and we think that they have at least indicated the method by which it might be attained. In the Folio, and in the quartos where quartos exist, supplemented by correction where cor-

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rection is indispensably necessary for the restitution of prosody and sense, we have the material.

The editors, perhaps, who have come nearest to a satisfactory edition are Dyce, and the editors of the Globe Shakespeare. Dyce was a man of sound sense and of fine taste; in the first quality the Cambridge editors fully equal him; in the second they are signally, nay, deplorably, deficient. Our debt to Dyce and to them is considerable, but they are very far indeed from giving us what is wanted. Their texts stand in pretty much the same relation to an authentic text as Miss Holroyd's most ingenious concoction stands to the original draughts of Gibbon's autobiography. To the scholar to whom we must look for such a text as will supply what is needed, three qualifications will be indispensable. Firstly, he must have a fine ear for rhythm, and thorough knowledge of Elizabethan prosody. This will show him that to modernize the spelling and tamper unnecessarily with the line arrangement of the originals is absolutely unwarrantable. If for example he finds in *Macbeth*, ii. 3—

Their hands and faces were all badg'd with blood,  
So were their daggers, which unwip'd we found  
Upon their pillows: they star'd and were distracted,  
No man's life was to be trusted with them,

he will not print—

So were their daggers, which unwip'd we found  
Upon their pillows:

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They star'd and were distracted; no man's life  
Was to be trusted with them.

Or if he finds in *Macbeth* (i. 3)—

As thick as tale  
Came post with post,

he will not print—

As thick as hail.

Or in *Julius Caesar*—

I met a lion  
Who *glazed* upon me,

he will not print “glared.”<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, he must possess the tact, good sense and intelligence to discern where, in the case of quartos existing, the quarto is to be preferred to the folio, or the folio to the quarto; and where, in spite of obscurity and harshness, the original reading is not to yield to conjecture, however plausible and brilliant conjecture may be. And thirdly, he must be familiarly acquainted with all the peculiarities of Elizabethan phraseology and syntax, which will teach him that what in innumerable passages seems unsound is sound, and not to be disturbed. An edition of Shakespeare edited on principles like these—and no such edition exists—would supply a real want, and could not fail to be a great boon to all who are interested in the serious study of the poet.

<sup>1</sup> All these and many other unnecessary alterations are made in *The Globe* text.

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Of that portion of Messrs. Van Dam and Stoffel's work which deals with the prosody of Shakespeare, we cannot speak favourably. It seems to us to be based, like Dr. Abbott's dissertation in his *Shakespearian Grammar*, on a hypothesis which is radically unsound. The laws of metre can be ascertained and fixed, and canons can be established, as precise and infallible as Porson's in their application to the iambic senarius. But the laws of rhythm admit of no such definite formulation. The only criterion is a criterion which no analysis can reduce to law: it is the criterion of the ear and of the ear alone. Establish a rule, and the innumerable exceptions render it nugatory; provide formulæ, and the moment they are applied they break down. Till about 1603 Shakespeare's scheme was, as a rule, a purely metrical one, and may, therefore, be reduced to rule. With the iambus as its basis, its variations rarely exceeded the variations legitimate in the iambic senarius of the Attic drama. But afterwards it became, as a rule, purely rhythmical, and as irreducible to formulas as the expression of emotion on mobile human features, or the tones in a sympathetically sensitive human voice. We do not deny that elaborate tables, noting instances of syncope, of 'a,' of 'e,' of 'i,' and of almost every letter in the alphabet; of aphaeresis; of apocope; of synalœphe, and the like, are of real use; but they are of use as illustrating some of the character-

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istics of his versification, as demonstrating that the editors have no right to tamper arbitrarily with the original texts; they are not of use as attempts to reduce Shakespeare's versification to rule. When Dr. Abbott tells us that, in the line in the Duke's speech in *Measure for Measure*--

Thou bear'st thy heavy riches but a journey,  
And death unloads thee. Friend hast thou none,

we are to scan "friend" as a dissyllable, we know that what explains the apparent deficiency in the verse is, partly the emphasis laid on "friend," and partly the pause before it. So in *Coriolanus* (iii. 1, 311)—

*Brutus.* Spread further.

*Men.* One word more, one word.

Here we are told the first "word" is a dissyllable. Could anything be more ridiculous than such a theory? To assume that the structure of ordinary blank verse is the norm, and that every deviation from that norm can be accounted for by licences which may be tabulated, is surely the very insanity of pedantry. It is true, that the structure of ordinary blank verse composed on metrical principles, is the norm; but the deviations are assignable to nothing which can be reduced to rule. Within certain limits, prescribed instinctively by the poet's sense of harmony, his verse in all his later plays is, to borrow an expression of his own, as "free as mountain winds," irreducible, in its infinite plasticity, to



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or take the noble passage in *Othello*, where, as printed in the First Folio, the rhythm is practically marked :

Oh, my soules joy :  
 If after every tempest come such calmes,  
 May the windes blow, till they have waken'd death,  
 And let the labouring Barke, climbe hills of seas  
 Olympus high : and duck again as low,  
 As hell's from Heaven. If it were now to dye,  
 'Twere now to be most happy. For I feare  
 My soule hath her content so absolute,  
 That not another comfort like to this  
 Succeeds in unknowne Fate.

As long as Shakespeare adhered to a metrical scheme it is both possible and sound to test his prosody by reference to definite canons, for he was writing according to fixed principles. Had, for example, such a passage as the following occurred in a metrical scheme—

O Proserpina,  
 For the Flowres now that (frighted) thou let'st fall  
 From Diss's Waggon : Daffadills  
 That come before the Swallow dares,

we should have seen that in the third line a disyllabic word had dropped out, but the ear tells us that rhythmically there is no deficiency.

The principles of the harmony of Shakespeare's prosody, from the moment he quitted a metrical for a rhythmical scheme, can no more be discovered by such methods as Dr. Abbott and



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Messrs. Van Dam and Stoffel adopt than the secret of life by the scalpel of the anatomist, or, to employ a more appropriate simile, the music of waves by counting their splashes. All that such methods do is to provide for his prosody a Procrustean bed, to the perplexity and torture of those who can discern instinctively the music which instinctively the poet produced.

On Messrs. Van Dam's and Stoffel's amazing theories about Shakespeare's metrical system, and their still more amazing re-arrangements of his prose as verse, we forbear to comment. We can only say that they make the poet discourse such discord as would, in De Quincey's phrase, "splinter the teeth of a crocodile, and make the adder shake her ears."

## IX

# THE BACON-SHAKESPEARE MANIA <sup>1</sup>

## I

“**L**IKE as many substances in nature which are solid do putrefy and corrupt into worms, so it is the property of good and sound knowledge to putrefy and dissolve into a number of subtile, idle, unwholesome and (as I may term them) vermiculate questions, which have indeed a kind of quickness and life of spirit, but no soundness of matter or goodness of quality.” So wrote Bacon in that incomparable analysis of the abuses of learning which he inserts in the first book of his great treatise.<sup>2</sup> And there is no literature, ancient or modern, which does not abound in illustrations. A Roman philosopher and a Roman satirist ridiculed the fribbles who wasted life in discussing the exact number of Ulysses’ crew; the exact quantity of wine

<sup>1</sup> *The Mystery of William Shakespeare: A Summary of Evidence.* By his Honour Judge Webb, sometime Fellow of Trinity College, Regius Professor of Laws and Public Orator in the University of Dublin.

<sup>2</sup> *Advancement of Learning*, bk. i.; *Works*, Spedding & Ellis, vol. iii. p. 285.

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given to Aeneas and his followers by their Sicilian host; the name of Anchises' nurse and the name and nationality of Archemorus' stepmother. But the moderns have improved on the ancients, by substituting for futile and absurd inquiries still more futile and absurd paradoxes. That Solomon was the author of the *Iliad*, and Nausicaa the authoress of the *Odyssey*; that the Comedies of Terence, the *Aeneid* of Virgil and the Odes of Horace were the compositions of mediaeval monks; that the Annals of Tacitus were forged by Poggio Bracciolini; that *Paradise Lost* was concocted by a syndicate, the president of which was Ellwood; that King Alfred wrote the *Beowulf*, and George III the *Letters of Junius*; that Emily Tennyson was the author of *In Memoriam*—all these absurdities have been gravely maintained, and some of them supported by arguments surprisingly specious and ingenious, as well as with profound and curious erudition.

But among these and similar paradoxes one stands alone. It is not so much by its absurdity as by the absence of everything which could give any colour to that absurdity, that the Bacon-Shakespeare myth holds a unique place among literary follies. Its supporters have no pretensions to be considered even as sophists. Their systematic substitutions of inferences for facts and of hypotheses for proofs; their perverted analogies; their blunders and their mis-

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representations; their impudent fictions; and their prodigious ignorance of the very rudiments of the literature with which they are concerned could not, for one moment, impose on any one, who, with competent knowledge and a candid and open mind, had taken the trouble to investigate the subject. Their contentions and arguments, indeed, so far from misleading any sane scholar, produce the same impression on the mind as Mrs. Gamp's curls—those “bald old curls that could scarcely be called false, they were so very innocent of anything approaching to deception”—produced on the eyes of their beholders.

But, unhappily, the majority of those who are sufficiently interested in Bacon and Shakespeare to read what is popularly written about them are not sane scholars, or, indeed, scholars at all: and the believers in this monstrous myth are said to number upwards of half a million people in Europe and America. It has periodicals devoted to its promulgation; it has its apostles in public lecturers; it has its Bibliography. The bulky volumes, the monographs, essays and articles of which it is the theme, would, as that Bibliography shows, fill no inconsiderable library. And this literature, judging from the contributions which have recently been made to it, is as yet only in its infancy.

Now, we will say at once that, had it not been for the appearance of Dr. Webb's volume, we should no more have thought of discussing this

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subject than we should have thought of seriously discussing a treatise written by some undergraduate who, having been plucked for his classics in Smalls, instead of attempting to retrieve the disaster, betook himself to demonstrating that the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles were originally composed in Latin by Livius Andronicus, and afterwards turned into Greek by Archias and Parthenius. But when a scholar of the eminence of Dr. Webb, a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and a Professor of the University, not only gives the sanction of his name to this grotesque heresy, but elaborately defends it, the whole matter assumes quite another complexion. So far from an exposure of the qualifications and methods of the calumniators of that genius, who is the capital glory of the English-speaking race, being superfluous, it is nothing less than an imperative duty. Nor is this all. Dr. Webb is by far the ablest and most distinguished man who has appeared in the ranks of the Baconians. His work, which professes to be judicial, marshals all the arguments which his predecessors have advanced in favour of their contention. It thus presents in epitome the whole case, which may fairly be said to stand or fall in its presentation at the hands of a champion, whose pre-eminence among Baconians in ability and reputation probably no Baconian would dispute. We shall, therefore make no apology either for our minute

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examination of Dr. Webb's book, or for our very plain speaking in commenting on it.

The history of the craze which Dr. Webb has thus invested with importance is, briefly, this. It is said to have originated from some suggestions thrown out by a Mr. J. C. Hart, an American, in a book entitled *The Romance of Yachting*, published at New York in 1848. This book, as it is neither in the British Museum nor in any library known to us, we have never seen, nor can we say whether Mr. Hart intended his remarks seriously, or as a joke. But, in 1856, one Mr. William Henry Smith, in a letter addressed to Lord Ellesmere, then President of the Shakespeare Society, elaborately propounded the theory that Bacon was the author of the plays attributed to Shakespeare. In the following year he expanded his letter into a small volume entitled *Bacon and Shakespeare: An Inquiry touching Players, Play-houses, and Play-writers*. Mr. Smith, who is said to have made a convert of Lord Palmerston, was the first to furnish the arguments which his successors have only expanded, namely the *à priori* reasons in favour of the Baconian and against the Shakespearean authorship of the plays; the evidence afforded by parallel passages; and the quotation—to which the Baconians attach so much importance—from the postscript of Sir Tobie Matthew's letter.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the postscript of a letter addressed to Bacon

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But Mr. W. H. Smith had been anticipated. In the January number of *Putnam's Monthly* in the same year, 1856, had appeared an article entitled *William Shakespeare and his Plays; An Inquiry Concerning Them*. This was written by Miss Delia Bacon, an American lady, a silly hysterical fanatic who, after expanding her article into a bulky farrago of extravagant rubbish, entitled *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare*, died, not long afterwards, in a lunatic asylum. Even in the opinion of Baconians poor Miss Bacon's rodomontade was not of much service to the cause. But in 1866 Nathaniel Holmes, an American lawyer and a judge in Kentucky, published at New York the most important contribution which, with the exception of Dr. Webb's work, has ever been made to the question, *The Authorship of the Plays Attributed to Shakespeare*; and this, gradually expanding, has run through four editions. Judge Holmes followed the lead of

Matthew writes: "The most prodigious wit that ever I knew of my nation, and of this side of the sea, is of your lordship's name, though he be known by another." (Printed in Birch's *Letters, Speeches, and Charges, etc., of Francis Bacon*, p. 392.) Matthew was a Roman Catholic, and the reference is, no doubt, as Mr. Sidney Lee suggests, to some pseudonymous Jesuit, whom he had met on the Continent, probably Thomas Southwell, whose real name was Bacon. Matthew was an ill-balanced, flighty person, to whom the words "the most prodigious wit" would mean no more than superlatives commonly mean with such people.

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Mr. W. H. Smith, filling out with exhaustive completeness what Smith had only sketched in outline. As Dr. Webb incorporates all that is of any importance in Holmes' work it is not necessary to say more about it here, beyond remarking that in blunders, misrepresentations, sheer fictions and general obliquity of judgment his Honour Judge Holmes possibly excels his Honour Judge Webb.

Next comes Mrs. Henry Pott, an industrious and accomplished lady, whom we are very sorry to find in such company. In 1883 she edited in its entirety a certain collection of notes and quotations made by Bacon, and entitled by him *Promus of Formularies and Elegancies*, from which Spedding, as it was of no use to any one but the compiler, had, very judiciously, published only extracts. The object of Mrs. Pott's editorial labours was to prove that the compiler of the *Promus* must have been the author of the Plays, for, as she triumphantly pointed out, there are no less than four thousand and four hundred identities of expression or thought in the *Promus* and in the Plays. This certainly seemed a staggering discovery. But the moment Mrs. Pott's readers turned to her illustrations their wonder soon ceased. Her method is simple. She finds the words "Amen" and "well" in the *Promus* and in the Plays; and this astounding "parallel" is typical of some hundreds of her "parallels." Some



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hundreds more are accounted for by such equally extraordinary analogies as, "I was thinking," "good morrow," "beleeve it." At least two thousand have absolutely no resemblance at all, verbal or otherwise. Indeed, it may be said with confidence, that, in no single instance has this indefatigable enthusiast produced an example of a phrase, a quotation, a proverb, or an idea which, in the Elizabethan Age, was not common property, or just as likely to have occurred to Shakespeare as to Bacon. If Mrs. Pott had applied the same test, say to Spenser, or Sidney, or Lyly, she would have found that any one of them might quite as well have been substituted for Shakespeare.

The year 1888 witnessed a further development of this craze, and the importation of an entirely new element into it. Whether *The Great Cryptogram* was an act of deliberate imposture, or the work of a man whose conscience was slumbering, as Gibbon expresses it, "in a mixed and middle state between self-illusion and voluntary fraud," we are not here concerned to inquire. On this subject, and on the cryptogram itself, Dr. Webb maintains a discreet silence. We doubt whether even the most advanced Baconians recognize any vitality in that portent of misplaced ingenuity. Certain it is, that within two years of its prodigious nativity it was staggering about, the wonder of fools and the laughing-stock of sane men,—

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With twenty trenched gashes on its head,  
The least a death to nature.

There is nothing to detain us in the *Bacon and Shakspeare* (1885) of Mr. W. H. Burr, the author, it may be added, of an absurd treatise to prove that Tom Paine was Junius; or in Mr. Edwin Reed's *Bacon versus Shakspeare* (1890), a masterpiece of nonsense which has gone through at least seven editions.

And now we have arrived at the work in which this question may be said to culminate, to which all that preceded—the labours of Mr. W. H. Smith, of Miss Delia Bacon, of Judge Holmes, of Mrs. Pott, of Ignatius Donnelly, of Mr. Edwin Reed, and of other minor luminaries—were merely preliminary. “Far off its coming shone,” for it had long been no secret among the elect that a mighty revelation was at hand. This was *The Bi-literal Cypher of Sir Francis Bacon discovered in his Works, and deciphered by Mrs. Elizabeth Wells Gallup*. This epoch-making work, which has gone through several editions, furnishes, in the words of its preface, “overwhelming and irresistible proofs” that Bacon not only wrote all the plays attributed to Shakespeare, but all the plays attributed to Marlowe Greene and Peele; the minor poems and *Faerie Queene* of Spenser, now reduced, like Homer, to myth; and the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, so long assumed to have come from Burton's pen. The cypher has

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also revealed the interesting fact that Bacon was the son of Queen Elizabeth and Leicester, the issue, we are thankful to learn, of a lawful but secret marriage. It is due to Mrs. Gallup to say, that for these astounding revelations she is indebted to native intuition, aided only by patient industry as a decipherer. She has nothing to do with analogies, deductions, and proofs, with the poor apparatus of learning and scholarship. She dwells in serener regions, in "an ampler ether, a diviner air." Nor has she any need even for collateral testimony such as the laity can give; for she has the best of all testimony. It is notorious among the initiated that the spirit of Bacon has, since the appearance of Mr. Donnelly's *Cryptogram*, been exceedingly uneasy, and, feeling that it was no longer possible or desirable to conceal his secret, not only inspired Mrs. Gallup to divulge it, but has been "making a clean breast of it" to several mediums in Chicago, in New York and in London. "Amid the tumult of our daily life"—we are quoting Mr. Edwin Reed's eloquent words—"if we listen reverently we may hear voices crying in the wilderness, perhaps the voice of a woman (poor Miss Bacon) alone and forsaken in a strange city—

No accent of the Holy Ghost  
The heedless world has ever lost.

From the banks of the Missouri, from the wheat-fields of Minnesota, from far off Melbourne, at

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the Antipodes, out of the heart of humanity, somewhere a response, in due time, is sure to come."

Dr. Webb plainly draws the line at Mrs. Gallup, and very sensibly observes that "demonstration" cannot "be supplied by Cryptogram or Cipher." But the work to which Dr. Webb owes most is not, so far as we can discover, mentioned by him. This is *Shakespeare Studies in Baconian Light*, by Mr. Robert M. Theobald. The substance of Mr. Theobald's work appeared, we believe, in a series of articles contributed some years ago to a leading London newspaper, under the modest title of "Dethroning Shakespeare." Mr. Theobald marshals, with laudable industry, the arguments *à priori* and otherwise, as well as the evidence accumulated by his predecessors; and adds much new matter of his own. His most remarkable contribution to the subject is a chapter entitled, "The Classic Diction of Shakespeare," in which he cites some two hundred and thirty words for the purpose of showing that the author of the Shakespearean dramas was familiar with Latin; that, as a Latin scholar, he was constantly "making linguistic experiments," and endeavouring to enrich his native language by coining new words or employing naturalized words in their strictly classical sense; that most of these words are to be found in Bacon, and that as Bacon was a classical scholar, and Shakespeare, as it is

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assumed, was not, the presumption is that Bacon coined the words, and that as he coined the words and so formulated the diction of the dramas, he must have been the author of those dramas. But, unfortunately, Mr. Theobald's learning is not equal to his industry. His ignorance of the English language anterior to, and contemporary with Shakespeare, and the recklessness with which he displays that ignorance, are almost incredible. In nearly every case the words which Bacon is assumed to have coined, or to have employed in a classical sense, are to be found, and are often of frequent occurrence, in the English of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Indeed, the whole chapter is an excellent illustration of that pseudo-erudition and specious parade of apparently conclusive testimony in which the Baconians are such adepts, and which enables them to impose so easily on credulous ignorance. Whoever would see how their myths fare when submitted to the scrutiny of real learning and sobriety, would do well to turn to Mr. Willis' recently published refutation of Mr. Theobald's fiction, entitled, *The Baconian Mint: its Claims Examined*. Well may Mr. Willis say: "Mr. Theobald ought, in my opinion, to cancel the fourteenth chapter of his work entitled, 'The Classic Diction of Shakespeare.'" For, at Mr. Willis' touch, the whole thing has collapsed like a house of cards. All that is of any importance

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in Mr. Theobald's contribution to the subject Dr. Webb assimilates, and, indeed, summarizes. To Dr. Webb's learning Mr. Theobald makes no pretension, and the consequence is that, while he anticipates almost all his disciple's absurdities, he does not give himself away by committing his disciple's blunders. But, although Dr. Webb's obligations to Mr. Theobald are so considerable, it is due to Dr. Webb to say, that this does not detract from the importance of his work.

*The Mystery of William Shakespeare: A Summary of Evidence*, is, therefore, the most noteworthy contribution which has, as yet, been made to the Bacon-Shakespeare question: firstly, because of the weight it must necessarily carry, coming as it does from a man of Judge Webb's eminence and authority, both as a scholar and as a professional expert in the law of evidence; and secondly, because it is comprehensively typical of the means employed by the Baconians to support their paradox; it is the fullest statement of their case by their most distinguished advocate. Let us survey it in detail.

### II

Dr. Webb's first contention is, that there is no proof that the poems and the plays attributed to Shakespeare were really written by him; in other words that the "Shakspeare"

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of the Will, whose baptism and death are recorded in the registers of Stratford-on-Avon, cannot be identified with "Shakespeare," the poet. Now, it is quite true that, in the many references to him by his contemporaries, he is not described as Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon, any more than Marlowe is described as Marlowe of Canterbury, or Greene as Greene of Norwich, or as Tennyson, in our own day, would be described as Tennyson of Somersby. It is also true that the registers are, after the manner of such documents, silent about him as a poet, and that in his Will he makes no mention of his poems and plays—a circumstance which is easily explained by the fact that he had no property in them. But Ben Jonson, in the famous eulogy prefixed to the First Folio, calls him "Sweet Swan of Avon," and, in his verses prefixed to the same volume, Leonard Digges speaks of "Thy Stratford Monument," while the bust of him in Stratford Church, erected before 1623, corresponds, in such essentials as would be likely to be preserved in two most inartistic representations, with the portrait in the First Folio. The inscription under the bust indicates the eminence of its original as a poet—"Judicio Pylium, genio Socratem, arte Maronem"—and an unbroken tradition associates the person buried in the chancel of Stratford Church with the author of the poems and plays.

To all this Dr. Webb's reply is the hypothesis,

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that Jonson, Heminge and Condell, with all who were concerned in the publication of the First Folio, were either guilty of a deliberate fraud, or had devised an ingenious "blind"; that Jonson, at least, knew that the real Shakespeare, that is Bacon, was alive, as is plainly indicated by the present tense in the lines—

Shine forth, thou Star of Poets, and with rage,  
Or influence, chide or cheer the drooping Stage,

(though the passage continues)

*Which since thy flight from hence, hath mourn'd like  
night*  
And despairs day, but for thy volume's light.

Dr. Webb also suggests that, in the couplet in the verses "To the Reader,"

The figure, that thou here seest put,  
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut,

the preposition "for" in the second line should be understood as meaning "instead of." In a word Dr. Webb contends, that Jonson's eulogy is addressed not to the dead player *Shakspere*, but to the living poet *Shakespeare*, that is to Bacon.

What then are we asked to credit? Even this; —that Ben Jonson was suborned by Bacon to be continually juggling, both in his private conversation and in his printed works, with *Shakspere* the Player and *Shakespeare*-Bacon the Poet; that he consented to become a party to the elaborate



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fraud or blind which we have described; that Heminge and Condell, the Player's intimate friends and literary executors, were also in the secret, obligingly contributing a tissue of falsehoods; that the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery condescended to enter into the conspiracy; and that the player himself, during the whole of his shameful career, submitted to become an incarnate lie. The extraordinary thing about all this is, we may add, that Judge Webb is, to all appearance, perfectly serious.

Pass we now to his Honour's account of the relations between Ben Jonson and Shakespeare. This, from beginning to end, is a mass of absolutely unwarrantable assumptions, stated as facts from which deductions are drawn. Its object is to show that the Shakespeare whom Ben Jonson disparaged was not the Shakespeare whom he eulogized, and that, consequently, the verses in the First Folio could not have referred to the "Player." And first for the disparagement. We are informed that Pantalabus in the *Poetaster* and that "Poet-Ape" in Jonson's fifty-sixth Epigram were meant for Shakespeare. There is not an iota of proof, or even of probability, that either the one or the other had any reference to Shakespeare at all. The *Poetaster* was an attack on Marston and Decker, and there is not a word in the play which justifies us in supposing that Shakespeare was even

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glanced at. Pantalabus,<sup>1</sup> there can be little doubt, is either Marston or Decker, most probably Marston. That "Poet-Ape" was designed for Shakespeare was a baseless conjecture of Chalmers, too absurd for Gifford even to discuss. The portrait was almost certainly intended for Decker. Nor, as Gifford has conclusively shown,<sup>2</sup> is there any evidence that Ben Jonson "disparaged" Shakespeare. Nothing which he has said in censure of him exceeds the limits of fair criticism, namely, that "he wanted art," and that he was too fluent and careless in composition. Indeed in all Jonson's direct references to him there is nothing incompatible with what he wrote of him in prose, "I loved the man, and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any. . . . He redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned,"—and with what he wrote of him, more magnificently, in verse. Nothing at all can be deduced from the well-known passage about "the purge" in part ii.

<sup>1</sup> *Poetaster*, iii. 1, and see Gifford's note.

<sup>2</sup> *Proofs of Ben Jonson's Malignity from the Commentators of Shakespeare's Works*, ed. Cunningham, vol. i. pp. lxxxii. seqq. ; and see Ward's *English Dramatic Literature*, vol. ii. pp. 327 seqq. Gifford has, however, probably gone a little too far. Ben Jonson, no doubt, did regard Shakespeare as a rival, and is continually glancing at his works ill-naturedly ; but there is nothing to warrant "disparagement" of him in any serious sense, much less coarse and contemptuous attacks on him.

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v. 3 of *The Returne from Parnassus*.”<sup>1</sup> All we know about their personal relations has reference to interchanges of kindness. So much for Dr. Webb’s distinction between *Shakspeare* the Player, whom Jonson “disparaged,” and *Shakespeare-Bacon* the Poet, whom he eulogized.

But Dr. Webb’s eccentricities do not end here. On p. 138 of his work he admits that, in the remarks in the *Discoveries*, an extract from which

<sup>1</sup> The passage runs: “Few of the University pen plaies well. . . . Why here’s our fellow Shakspeare puts them all down, I, and Ben Jonson too. O that Ben Jonson is a pestilent fellow: he brought up Horace giving the poets a pill, but our fellow Shakspeare hath given him a purge that made him beray his credit.” The pill referred to is undoubtedly Ben Jonson’s *Poetaster*, levelled against Dekker and Marston. What is meant by the “purge” which Shakespeare gave him can only be vaguely conjectured. According to Mr. Fleay it refers to a production of *Troilus and Cressida* at Cambridge, prior to its production on the London stage, but there is absolutely nothing to warrant such an assertion: according to Mr. Feis’ extraordinary theory the “purge” was *Hamlet*. The notion of a controversy between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson appears to have originated from Mr. Feis (see his *Shakespeare and Montaigne*, pp. 133-210). As a specimen of the sort of arguments employed by Mr. Feis for identifying Shakespeare with Crispinus in the *Poetaster*, the following will probably suffice:—“Rufus Laberius Crispinus might truly be thus rendered: ‘The red-haired SHAK-erius with the crisp head, who cribs like St. Crispin.’ The word Rufus, as already explained, reminds us both of Shakespeare’s red hair and his pre-name William. Laberius (from *labare*, to shake (!): hence Shak-erius, a similar nickname as Greene’s SHAKE-scene) is clearly an indication of the poet’s family name.” Such are the authorities on whom Dr. Webb relies.

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we have quoted, Jonson is referring to Shakspere the Player, and, having thus given himself away, still persists in distinguishing between Shakspere the Player and Shakespeare the Poet! That Shakspere the Player and Shakespeare the Poet could not be identical is, he contends, proved by the fact that Jonson, in his "Address to the Author," speaks of the "well-torned and true-filed lines" of *his* Shakespeare, while Heminge and Condell describe *their* Shakespeare as expressing himself with "that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers." But Ben Jonson, in the very passage in which Judge Webb admits that he is speaking not of Shakspere the Player, but of Shakespeare the Poet (i.e. Bacon), regrets the fluency of his friend, wishing that "he had blotted a thousand lines."

Dr. Webb's next exploit is totally to misrepresent and misdescribe the section entitled "Scriptorum Catalogus" in Jonson's *Discoveries*. This he cites as "a bead-roll of all the great masters of art and language" among Jonson's contemporaries, jubilantly pointing out that Shakespeare is not mentioned. Dr. Webb must surely know that this "Catalogus" was not intended to be "a bead-roll of all the great masters, etc." It was simply the names of a few of the most eminent scholars and public men of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries who had been associated with letters,

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casually jotted down, including Sir Thomas More, Bishop Gardiner, Sir Thomas Smith, Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Chancellor Egerton. If Shakespeare's name is not mentioned neither is the name of any Elizabethan poet mentioned, with the exception of Sidney, and Sidney is plainly not contemplated as a poet. We will make Judge Webb a present of a passage in Jonson which is much more to the point. In the section "Praecipendi Modi" he refers to Chaucer, Gower, Sidney, Spenser, and Donne as distinguished writers, but he makes no mention of Shakespeare.

Equally unwarrantable and baseless are Dr. Webb's assertions about the relations between Ben Jonson and Bacon. "It is probable," he says, "that Jonson assisted Bacon in the preparation of the *Novum Organum*." It is improbable, and in the highest degree improbable, that Ben Jonson had anything to do with the *Novum Organum*. "It is an undoubted fact," continues Dr. Webb, "that the Latin of the *De Augmentis*, which was published in 1623, was the work of Jonson." "An undoubted fact!"—and Dr. Webb can state this, with Rawley's words staring him in the face, "e linguâ vernaculâ proprio Marte in Latinam transferendo honoratissimus auctor plurimum sudavit"—that is the noble author took immense pains in translating it with his own

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hands out of English into Latin.<sup>1</sup> There is not a particle of evidence that Jonson gave the smallest assistance to Bacon in translating any of his works into Latin.

Now for Judge Webb's next "proof," or series of "proofs," that the poems and plays attributed to Shakespeare were not written by him. In Sonnet LXXVI appear these lines—

Why write I still all one, ever the same,  
And keep invention in a noted weed,  
That every word doth almost tell my name,  
Showing their birth, and whence they did proceed?

The meaning of these lines, as the context, judiciously omitted by Dr. Webb, shows, is this: Why am I always writing in the same style, and on the same subject, and clothing my imagination or, perhaps it may be paraphrased, my work as a poet, in a dress which all know, so that every word I write almost proclaims

<sup>1</sup> To be quite accurate, there is a little difficulty in reconciling this statement of Rawley's and Bacon's own corroboration of it in his *Commentarius Solutus*, "Proceeding with the translation of my book of Advancement of Learning," with what Bacon writes to Father Baranzan: "Librum meum de Progressu Scientiæ *traducendum commisi*," and with what he says in the Letter prefixed to his *Advertisement touching a Holy War*, "I have thought good to procure a translation of that book into the general language." Probably the explanation is given by Tenison, *Baconiana*, p. 25, namely, that Bacon had assistance in the translation, re-writing, or, at least, carefully revising it himself. The only translator named is Herbert. Hobbes is also said to have assisted him.

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the name of its writer? Judge Webb's commentary is this:<sup>1</sup> "Here the author certainly intimates that Shakespeare was not his real name, and that he was fearful lest his real name should be discovered." Where, we gasp, does the author certainly intimate that Shakespeare was not his real name? On p. 156 we have a further commentary on the passage—"Whatever was the real name of the author of the plays, he is only known by the 'noted weed' in which he kept Invention. . . . Jean-Baptiste Poquelin preferred to be known as Molière, François-Marie Arouet became one of the immortals as Voltaire." Just so, we impatiently admit, but what has become of the noted weed? Where is it? What is it? Poquelin? Molière? Arouet? Voltaire? Bacon? Shakespeare? The men? Their works? On pp. 156-7 the corollary from this most amazing muddle appears to be drawn. We give it in Judge Webb's own words:—

If any one requires an explanation of the phrase, a "noted weed," it is supplied by Bacon, who, in his *Henry VII*, tells us that, when Perkin Warbeck took sanctuary, his principal adviser "elad himself like a hermit, and in that *weed* wandered about the country." Here then we have a pencil of luminous rays converging to a focal point. Bacon admits that in or before 1605 his head was wholly employed about Invention: the author of the Sonnets confesses that he kept invention in a noted weed; and Bacon's literary confidant declares that the most prodigious wit he ever knew of, this side of the sea, was of Bacon's name though he was known by another. The author of

<sup>1</sup> p. 64.

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the Sonnets, admittedly, was the author of the Poems and the Plays, and the whole Shakespearian question would seem to resolve itself into the question, who was the author of the Sonnets? A negative answer to this question is inevitably suggested. The author could not have been Shakspere. If *he* kept Invention he did not keep it in a noted weed. He had no reason to conceal his name. His name was as well known as that of Kempe or Burbage. It was familiar to the shouting varletry before whom he acted (pp. 156-7).

Succinctly stated this appears to mean: that, as Bacon, in a letter to Sir Tobie Matthew, has spoken of his "head being wholly employed about invention," observing also in his *Henry VII.* that Perkin Warbeck "clad himself like a hermit, and in that weed wandered about the country"; and that as Tobie Matthew had declared that "the most prodigious wit he ever knew of this side of the sea was of Bacon's name though he was known by another," while Shakespeare, being, as he was, "well known to the shouting varletry before whom he acted," did not "keep invention in a noted weed,"—therefore the writer of these lines was plainly Bacon and not Shakespeare. Whether such premises and such reasoning were ever before heard out of establishments which it would be too disrespectful to specify we do not know; what we do know is this, that we are ashamed to transcribe such trash, and still more ashamed to excruciate patience in discussing it. But in dealing with Baconians the first requisite in a critic is resignation. He is, in truth, pretty much in the



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position of Dickens' Poll Sweedlepipe, when he is confronted with Bailey. "There was no course open to the barber," after gazing blankly at the inexplicable creature, "but to go distracted himself, or to take Bailey for granted." But when Bailey assumes the form of a writer of Judge Webb's authority stern duty forbids us to take Bailey for granted, and we will endeavour not to go distracted ourselves.

To continue : Dr. Webb, having complacently pronounced the premises and conclusions to which we have referred to be "a pencil of luminous rays converging to a focal point," proceeds to his second series of "proofs." These consist of parallels between passages in Bacon and passages in Shakespeare, sometimes in ideas, sometimes in facts, and sometimes in phrases. Of these we will begin by saying that there is literally not one which is not common either to Elizabethan writers generally ; or to the classical and mediaeval writers on whom the Elizabethans habitually drew ; or which might not naturally have occurred independently to Bacon and Shakespeare ; or which might not, with obvious probability, have been borrowed by Shakespeare from Bacon's published works.

### III

And first for phraseology. "Sometimes," says Judge Webb, the use of a single phrase will supply "evidence that decides a question." This he

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finds in "discourse of reason," which is pronounced to be so peculiar that some Shakesperean critics have regarded it as a misprint. Now "discourse of reason," he jubilantly observes, occurs constantly in Bacon and twice in Shakespeare. If Judge Webb knew anything of early and Elizabethan English he would know that "discourse of reason" is a stock phrase. It occurs, as he might have learnt from *The New English Dictionary*, in Caxton, in Sir Thomas More, in Eden, in Holland's version of Plutarch's *Morals*. It occurs at least four times in Florio's *Montaigne*, published in 1603. Another "decisive" phrase is the "extraordinary" use of "excrements" for "hair," so used, observes Dr. Webb, by Bacon in his *Natural History* and so used by Shakespeare in *Hamlet* and elsewhere. But "excrements" in the English of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, so far from being "extraordinary" in this sense, is a common synonym for "hair," as Dr. Webb might have known from the author of *Soliman and Perseda*, from Bishop Hopkins, from Charles Butler, from Donne, from Heywood, from Chapman, from Randolph, from Walton, and from many other writers cited in current Glossaries. The phrase "diluculo surgere" is, we are informed, traceable to Bacon's *Promus*, but it is also, unfortunately, traceable to the source of many of Shakespeare's Latin phrases—Lily's *Grammar*. "Bacon," says

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Dr. Webb, "is the only writer who uses 'statua' for 'statue,' and the same form is used by Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar*." But, unfortunately for Dr. Webb, the word in Shakespeare is "statue," "statua" being a conjecture of Malone's, and it had no place in the text till 1793. This will probably suffice for Dr. Webb's "parallels" in words and phrases.

Nor does Dr. Webb fare better when he comes to his other analogies. "Who," he asks, commenting on the reference in *Richard II.*, "Down, down I come like glistening Phaethon," etc.—"would have bethought him of 'the glistening Phaethon' but the author of *The Wisdom of the Ancients*?" We will tell him: Norton in *Ferrex and Porrex*, Lyly in the first part of *Euphues*, Greene in his *Orlando Furioso* and *Penelope's Web*, the anonymous author of the *First Part of Selimus*, Marlowe in his second part of *Tamburlaine* and in *Edward II.*, Spenser in his *Tears of the Muses*—to cite instances which at once occur to us. "Bacon queries," says Dr. Webb, "whether the stone taken out of a toad's head be not available for the cooling of the spirits, and this incontinently furnishes Shakespeare with a metaphor." Both Shakespeare and Bacon could have found this in Maplet, in Fenton, in Gesner, in Topsel, in Nash, in Lyly and in so many writers that it would be tedious to transcribe their names. The well-known lines in *Richard III.* describing the "water

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swelling before a storm" is compared with a passage in Bacon's *Historia Ventorum* to prove the identity of authorship. The remark is taken, as every tiro in Shakespearean study knows, directly from the work which furnished Shakespeare with the plot of the play and which he closely follows throughout, Holinshed's *Chronicles*—the passage being one which Shakespeare has simply versified. "Before such great things men's hearts of a secret instinct of nature misgive them: as the sea without wind swelleth of himself some time before a tempest."<sup>1</sup> Judge Webb's ignorance or possibly his audacious dissimulation of knowledge for the purpose of making out his case is sometimes little less than amazing. As here for example. "Bacon observes that young cattle that are brought forth in the full of the moon are stronger and larger than those brought forth in the wane. Shakespeare adopts the idea, and calls Caliban a mooncalf" (!) If Judge Webb will turn to Nares' *Glossary*, or to any elementary notes on *The Tempest*, he will find something on the subject of "mooncalf" which will enlighten him. There

<sup>1</sup> *Chron.* iii. 721. Holinshed himself, or rather Hall, from whom he expands, plainly, we may add, derived it from Seneca:

Mittit luctûs signa futuri  
Mens, ante sui præsaga mali.  
Instat nautis fera tempestas,  
Quum sine vento tranquilla tument.

(*Thyestes*, 957-60.)

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is the same sort of thing in the absurd conclusion drawn by him from the line in *Hamlet*, "Doubt thou the stars are fires," namely, that as Bacon clung to an exploded theory, so does Shakespeare. As if the theory that the stars are fires is not a commonplace in the Greek and Roman classics, as a reference to the commentators on Lucretius v. 525, or Virgil, *Aen.* viii. 590, or Horace, *Odes*, I. xii. 47, will abundantly show. But we are really ashamed to have to insult our readers with this schoolboy information. Cressida, we are told, speaks the language of the *Advancement*, when she says,

To be wise and love  
Exceeds man's might: that dwells with gods, above.

Can Dr. Webb possibly be ignorant that this is nothing but a versification of Publius Syrus' well-known line, "Amare et sapere vix Deo conceditur"? and that it is quoted over and over again by Elizabethan writers?

Absurd as these parallels are, they are nothing to the absurdity of dozens of others which are pressed into the service of Dr. Webb's theory. Of these the following is typical. "According to Bacon tobacco 'refresheth the spirits by the opiate virtue thereof, and so dischargeth weariness as sleep likewise doth'; and in the *Tempest* Alonzo is 'attacked with weariness to the dulling of his spirits' and must needs 'sit down and rest'" (!) This precious "parallel" is of a piece with another on p. 219, in which, after being informed

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that Bacon and Shakespeare must have been identical, because they "had a trick of 'moulding their sentences in triads,'" we are invited to discern in Bacon's words in his confession of corruption—

"My lords, it is my act, my hand, my heart"

"a weird echo" of the words of Bassanio—

I will be bound to pay it ten times o'er,  
On forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart.

A "weird echo," indeed—an echo which, we cannot forbear adding, provokingly reminds us of another echo, sarcastically recorded by Bacon himself, in the first book of the *Advancement of Learning*, but which we are very far indeed from applying to Dr. Webb.

But we are as weary of this nonsense as our readers must be, and will now content ourselves with briefly considering three parallels which have some pretension to relevance. Both Bacon and Shakespeare agree in misrepresenting Aristotle's remark<sup>1</sup> about young men not being fit to be instructed in Political Philosophy, both of them substituting Moral Philosophy. Now Bacon's citation occurs in the *Advancement of Learning* which was published in 1605, Shakespeare's in *Troilus and Cressida* which was published in 1609. It is abundantly clear that Shakespeare was a studious reader of contemporary literature, and why, we ask, should he not have derived the reference and the error

<sup>1</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, i. 3.

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from Bacon's treatise?<sup>1</sup> Again, in *Henry V.* (the death of Falstaff) and in the *Historia Vitæ et Mortis* Shakespeare and Bacon have described the phenomena of approaching death. The one notes the "motus manuum floccos colligendo," the other "the fumbling with the sheets, and playing with flowers"; the one, the "nasus acutus," the other "the nose as sharp as a pen"; Bacon the "frigus extremitatum" and the "clamor," Shakespeare the "feet as cold as a stone and the crying out God, God, God, three or four times." And Dr. Webb proceeds to point out, in ludicrous triumph, that the *Historia Vitæ et Mortis* was not published till long after Shakespeare's death. Does Dr. Webb suppose that phenomena so common, so essentially characteristic of approaching death especially in fever, could not have been noted independently by such observers as Shakespeare and Bacon?<sup>2</sup> Even here, it may be added, Dr.

<sup>1</sup> If error it be, for, as Mr. Sidney Lee justly observes, by "political" philosophy Aristotle is referring to the ethics of civil society, which are hardly distinguishable from what is commonly called "morals." He shows, by references to a French translation of the passage, published in Paris in 1553, where it is turned "science civile," to a note in a copy of Aristotle in the British Museum where it is translated "morall philosophy," and to a passage in an Italian essayist in 1622, where it is translated "morali," that this was the sense in which the term was generally understood in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (*Life of Shakespeare*, p. 370, note).

<sup>2</sup> There can, of course, be no doubt in the mind of anyone but a pedant that Shakespeare and Bacon were draw-

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Webb's habitual inaccuracy does not desert him, for in illustrating the "clamor" he cites "a' babbled of green fields," words which form no part of Shakespeare's text, being a mere conjecture of Theobald's.

Next comes the parallel which Dr. Webb and the Baconians regard as "almost conclusive." In his *Essay on Gardens* Bacon suggests that there should be gardens for every season in the year. For December, January, and the latter part of November "you must take such things as are green all winter," and he enumerates them. Then follow the plants and flowers belonging particularly to the latter part of January, and to all the months intervening between February and the beginning of November. Shakespeare, in the *Winter's Tale*, very prettily represents Perdita assigning to old Camillo rosemary and rue, that "keep seeming and savour all the winter long"; to Polixenes

ing on their own observation. But if parallels in books, as accessible to Shakespeare as to Bacon, are needed, they may be found in Philemon Holland's translation of Pliny's chapter on death (*Nat. Hist.* vii. 52), Holland translating "stragulæ vestis plicaturas" "a fumbling and pleiting of the bedclothes." Also in Lupton's *Notable Things* (1586), "If the forehead of the sick waxe red and his nose waxe sharpe, if he pull strawes or the cloathes of his bedde they are most certain tokens of death." No treatise of the ancient medical writers was so well known as Hippocrates' *Prognostics*, which specifies all the symptoms described by Shakespeare and Bacon. See particularly chaps. ii. and iv. See, too, *Lucretius*, vi. 1190-4, *Celsus*, ii. 6, and several later medical writers.



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the flowers of middle summer, as appropriate to middle age; to the young Florizel the flowers of spring. It is quite certain that Shakespeare could not have seen the *Essay on Gardens*, which was not published till 1625. But what of that? As Shakespeare and Bacon are dealing with the flowers peculiar to the different seasons of the year, and as Bacon's list is almost exhaustive, including about fifty, while Shakespeare specifies sixteen, how, in the name of common sense, could they avoid mentioning many of the same flowers? As it is, Shakespeare introduces five which Bacon does not include, at least under the same name, namely rue, carnation, savory, oxlips, and crown imperial. The true distinction lies in the magic of the poetical presentation of these flowers, of which there is as little in Bacon's bald catalogue as there would be in a nurseryman's instructions to his labourers. So much for this "almost conclusive parallel."

The futility of our author's analogies between Shakespeare's natural history and that of Bacon has been so fully exposed by Professor Dowden in the July number of the *National Review* for 1902 that there is no need to discuss it here. It may be sufficient to say that, in every case, what Dr. Webb cites as peculiar to Shakespeare and Bacon, are simply commonplaces in the natural history, or pseudo-natural history, current at that time.

Nor does Dr. Webb, with Bacon's extant

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poems staring him in the face, see any difficulty in attributing to him the blank verse of Shakespeare. For what, he asks, is Bacon's prose, very often, but blank verse in disguise? Judge Webb then proceeds to strip the disguise from a paragraph in the *Sylva Sylvarum*, exhorting us to "lay the sea-shell to our ear" and "detect the murmur of the sea." And the following is what the sea murmurs to us:—

The process

Of nature still will be, as I conceive,  
Not that the herb you work upon should draw  
The juice of the foreign herb, for that opinion  
We have formerly rejected, but that there will be  
A new confect of mould which perhaps will alter  
The seed, and yet not to the kind  
Of the former herb.

On the unspeakable absurdity of a critic with such qualifications as these sitting in judgment on poetry we forbear to comment.

In conclusion: what Judge Webb and the Baconians ask us to credit on such evidence as we have discussed is, that a man, whose conceptions of love, of beauty and of friendship found, as his whole character and career as well as the rest of his writings prove, exact expression in his essays on those subjects and in his *Essay on Marriage and Single Life*, was the author of *Venus and Adonis*, of the Sonnets, of *Romeo and Juliet*, and was the delineator of Viola, of Portia, of Rosalind, of Hermione, of Imogen; that a

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man without a spark of genial humour was the creator of the Merry Wives, of Falstaff, of Mercutio, of Touchstone and of Dogberry; that a writer, in whose voluminous works there is no trace of any dramatic imagination, of any light play of wit and fancy, of any profound passion, of any aesthetic enthusiasm, transformed himself into the poet of the marvellous dramas in which all these qualities are essential and predominating characteristics; that the master of a style the notes of which in colour, in tone, in rhythm are unmistakeable became, at will, the master of a style in which not one of these notes is, even in the faintest degree, discernible; and lastly, that a man should by the very poetry of which he acknowledged himself the composer refute all possibility of his being equal to the composition of poetry to which he never made any claim.

And why this monstrous tax on our credulity? Because it is unlikely that the son of a burgher in a provincial town should possess the classical knowledge, the knowledge of law, the knowledge of ancient and modern literature, of history and philosophy, of court and high life which the author of the Shakespearean dramas undoubtedly possessed. But of all the characteristics of the subtle and powerful intellect which informed and nourished the genius which gave us these dramas the most obviously striking is its marvellous receptivity.

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Shakespeare's first schoolmaster was a Fellow of Corpus Christi, Oxford, and the poet certainly left Stratford well grounded in Latin, and in all probability with some knowledge of Greek. It is not unlikely that he passed some time, before leaving Stratford, in a lawyer's office. During his life in London he was surrounded with scholars, being on intimate terms with one of the profoundest of them, Ben Jonson. He breathed, indeed, in an atmosphere of learning. Even assuming that he did not read the Greek and Latin classics in the original (we have proof all but conclusive that he did, as has been discussed elsewhere in this volume), they were almost all of them accessible to him in translations, or could reach him filtered through other media; and their influence simply saturated the popular literature of the time. At the weekly sermons at Paul's Cross he might easily have picked up all and more of that knowledge, never exact and accurate, of Plato, of Aristotle, and of the ancient philosophies generally which we find in his plays. No one who will turn to the books current in Shakespeare's time will have the smallest difficulty in understanding how he acquired his information. That he was occasionally at Court, and acquainted with members of the Court circle is certain. The language in which he addresses Southampton in the dedication of the *Rape of Lucrece* shows that he was on terms of unusual intimacy, for a man

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in his position, with that nobleman. It is, indeed, abundantly clear that he had ample opportunities for studying high life and the aristocracy.

The moment, therefore, we come to inquire into the "mystery" of the Stratford burgess' son, we find that it simply resolves itself into the mystery of his unique constitution and temperament. What must for ever remain inexplicable is not what puzzles the Baconians, his attainments, his culture and his knowledge of life and men, but how it came to pass that Nature should have created a man whose intellect and genius are, in their receptiveness, in their range, grasp, and versatility almost as miraculous as the suspension of natural laws. What the Baconians forget is that, even in its less extraordinary manifestations, there is no analogy between genius and talent. That a lad of seventeen, without education and in absolute solitude, should have produced the Rowley Forgeries; that a Scotch peasant, with Nature only as his teacher, should have produced what is most exquisite in the poetry of Burns is equally beyond the range of possibility under normal conditions.

We do not suppose that anything we have said or demonstrated will have the smallest effect on those who are far gone in the Baconian craze. But if there be any one in the preliminary stages of the malady, the ugliest symptom of which is the tickling desire to rush before the

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public with a new "discovery," of that person there is still some hope. And to that person we would, in all kindness, proffer the advice which Sterne tells us that he gave on a certain occasion to Smelfungus, who was meditating a less mischievous indiscretion. "'I'll tell it,' cried Smelfungus, 'to the world.' 'You had better tell it,' said I, 'to your physician.'"

In all seriousness, this Baconian craze is a subject in which the student of morbid psychology is far more intimately concerned than the literary critic. Ignorance and vanity can account for much; the Idols of the Cave and of the Market-place for more, but none of these, singly or collectedly, can account for all. Some appear to be fascinated by its sheer audacity of absurdity. Others, with little judgment to start with, lose what they have in the bewildering mazes of false facts, false inferences and myriad irrelevancies of its apologists, and in mere weariness and perplexity acquiesce. Some again, and this no doubt accounts for its popularity among lawyers, are constitutionally insensible of what relates to aesthetic, to the incredible, nay ineffable, absurdity of supposing that the author of the poems of Bacon (and he has left us ample means of judging of his powers as a poet) could have been the author of the poems attributed to Shakespeare. "It standeth well," says Sir Edward Coke, "with the gravity of lawyers to cite verses": whether it stands well

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with their gravity to travel out of citation and turn critics of them is another question. This at least is certain, that their judgments and theories in that capacity are often a severe trial to the gravity, and even to the patience of most other people.

And so this ridiculous epidemic spreads, till it has now assumed the proportions, and many of the characteristics, of the dancing mania of the Middle Ages.





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